

Attleborough Academy Norfolk

9 Norwich Road, Attleborough, Norfolk NR17 2AJ

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal's determination that every child should have the best life chances is an ethos that he has embedded throughout the school. He and his team have created a purposeful learning environment.
- There has been a rise in standards of achievement. This is because most teaching is effective and pupils make good progress, and sometimes better, in many aspects of their learning.
- Norfolk Academies Trust, and the local governing body, have been instrumental in providing support that has resulted in school improvement. The effective communication between them ensures that school leaders are meticulously held to account over the quality of teaching, and the attendance, behaviour and achievements of Attleborough pupils.
- The new key stage 3 curriculum has been well planned. Pupils at key stage 3 are making good progress from their starting points in many curriculum areas. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The 'inclusion centre' and the 'SAFE' team (School and Family Enrichment Team) provide exemplary support for all pupils, especially for children who are looked after.
- The resource base, run by the school, serves the needs of pupils very effectively. Pupils receive a good learning experience which is tailored to their specific needs and successfully reintegrates them back into their own school after their time in the resource base.
- Those pupils who attend college courses are very well prepared for the next stages in their education, training or employment. Leaders make sure that this opportunity produces the best outcomes for those pupils.
- Attleborough pupils are very well prepared to be citizens of modern Britain. They are taught not only how to keep themselves safe in the wider world, but also how to be respectful, tolerant and inclusive young people.
- The sixth-form provision is good. Students receive high-quality teaching and support, and are making progress broadly in line with national averages in most subjects.
- Despite improvement, the progress of pupils in science is not yet as good as in other subjects.
- Despite efforts, the attendance of some groups of pupils is not yet at the national average, most notably disadvantaged pupils.
- A minority of parents do not feel that the communication with leaders is as effective as it could be.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Support pupils to make even more rapid progress by:
 - continuing to develop teaching in science so that pupils can catch up where there are previous gaps in their learning, and so that the most able pupils can attain well in the separate sciences
 - further refining systems in leaders' monitoring of sixth-form achievement so that interventions support students to make better progress, especially in their AS levels
 - ensuring that all teaching encourages the most able disadvantaged pupils to make even more rapid progress so that they can attain the highest grades, most notably in English.
- Continue to improve pupils' personal development and well-being by:
 - using the highly personalised and effective attendance systems so that the overall attendance of all groups of pupils improves to meet national average, most notably for disadvantaged pupils and for those pupils who have a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities or an education, health and care plan
 - develop more opportunities for some parents to have direct contact with leaders so that they can get clear communication about their child, understand the rationale behind the leaders' decisions, and celebrate the many successes in the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal epitomises the school's ethos of 'CARE' (commitment, acknowledgement, respect, excellence) in all of his work. Staff and pupils are clear on the high standards that he expects. Consequently, despite some significant challenges, achievement has improved markedly and the school is a calm, orderly and welcoming place.
- The Norfolk Academies Trust has supported the school improvement very effectively. The work of the trust's central services team for finance, human resources, site support and much more has ensured that leaders can focus on pupils' achievement fully. The open collaboration between the many providers in the multi-academy trust and sponsor, TEN (Transforming Education in Norfolk), is very positive in helping leaders to find mutual ways to resolve any challenges or difficulties.
- Leaders and governors know the school well. Leaders actively commission external quality assurance, both through the trust and through high-performing local schools. As a result, leaders' self-evaluation is based on thorough internal and external analysis and accurately identifies the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Leaders are rigorous in how they hold staff to account for the achievement of pupils. An array of information is used to measure pupils' progress and this information is used to decide on staff pay increases and progression. Stronger teaching strategies are shared among staff, while any weaker teaching is identified and supported to improve quickly. Newly qualified teachers in the school are supported well to develop their teaching skills, through regular mentoring and effective support. Consequently, most teaching is good, with some that is outstanding.
- The principal has secured effectual subject leadership. Subject leaders use other high-performing schools and examination courses to routinely moderate their assessment practices. Many of the team are examination board assessors or moderators. Against a backdrop of some very difficult staffing turbulence, this group has ensured that teachers teach well, and that pupils learn well.
- Pupils access a broad range of subjects and skills in the curriculum. The curriculum covers a range of technical, sporting, creative and linguistic skills. Particularly noteworthy is the work of the assistant headteacher and subject leaders in developing a thorough curriculum and assessment system at key stage 3. Leaders are constantly reviewing this new curriculum and assessment system to see how they can refine and improve it.
- New leaders in the sixth form have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in that provision. They have a good understanding of the 16– 19 study programmes and are building on the many strengths already present in the provision in the sixth form.
- Leaders have created an ethos through the curriculum that allows pupils to become respectful, thoughtful citizens. Many pupils commented to inspectors about the school's emphasis on equality, tolerance, respect and kindness to others. Consequently, almost all pupils said that the school was a place where it was safe to be different, it was easy to make friends, and that they all had friends from very different backgrounds, cultures and belief systems.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is being used effectively to help pupils who did not

achieve the expected standards at the end of key stage 2 in English and mathematics. Early identification, reading programmes, additional literacy and numeracy lessons as well as summer schools are providing effective support to diminish gaps for lower-attaining pupils.

- The additional funding that the school receives for disadvantaged pupils is used well to meet their various different needs. Most notably, leaders have identified that social, emotional and mental health is becoming an increasingly difficult barrier for many of these pupils and have invested heavily in staff training. Leaders through an external review have also identified that the most able pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, do not always make rapid enough progress in a few lessons to attain the highest grades, most notably in English. Equally, the most able disadvantaged do consistently opt for languages at key stage 4 and/or 5. Consequently, having identified this, leaders have made it a focus for their use of their additional funding that they receive for pupils.
- Most parents appreciate the teaching and support that their children receive, and a number were effusive in their praise. However, there are a significant minority who feel that communication with leaders could be improved, especially where they have concerns about their child's specific issues.

Governance of the school

- The Norfolk Academy Trust governors and the local governing body hold leaders to account. There is a clear scheme of delegation so both groups know their areas of responsibility and their systematic communication ensures that governance is effective and efficient.
- Both governance boards are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They receive a wealth of information from school leaders about how the school is doing, as well as through their commissioning of external reviews. Governors challenge leaders, particularly over the progress of disadvantaged pupils, the appropriateness of the use of the additional funding that they receive and pupils' attendance and achievement.
- The local governing body take their statutory responsibilities to keep pupils at Attleborough Academy Norfolk safe seriously. Governors undertake regular training and ask pertinent questions about the attendance and achievement of children who are looked after, or those who are under child protection plans. The chair of the local governing body also undertakes regular checks of the single central record and staff files to ensure that the school follows safer recruitment processes when employing new staff.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding underpins the work of all staff at Attleborough Academy Norfolk. Staff, no matter what their role in the school, are well trained in the most up-to-date statutory guidance and are confident about the signs of abuse. Staff make regular referrals to the designated safeguarding staff and these referrals are reviewed promptly and actioned appropriately. Referrals to external agencies are followed up tenaciously by staff.
- Leaders and staff are clear on the link between attendance and safeguarding. Consequently, when pupils, especially those who have been identified as a concern, those who are looked after, or those who are known to child services, fail to attend school, their absence is chased without delay and referrals made speedily.

- Pupils are taught about how to keep safe. They receive regular assemblies, lessons and information about appropriate age-related ways to keep themselves safe at school, online and in the wider world. This ranges from stranger-danger to healthy relationships, depending on the age and needs of the pupils in each year group. Leaders use questionnaires to evaluate how well pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, and amend the curriculum content to react to any emerging needs that they identify.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the academy opened. Most is consistently good, including in the sixth form, with some that is outstanding.
- Teachers use internal and external moderation to ensure that they are accurate in assessment of their pupils. Leaders have also invested in ensuring that teachers attend the external examination courses. Consequently, leaders know that the assessment information provided to themselves and governors is accurate, and that they have a clear picture about how pupils are doing.
- Most teachers are aware of pupils' starting points and use this to plan learning that effectively meets their needs. Teachers are using, and constantly refining, the use of class charts, which provide them with information about pupils' particular requirements. Teachers use this well to improve underperformance, where necessary.
- Teachers in English and mathematics are using diagnostic evaluation of pupils' key stage 2 information shrewdly to support their new Year 7 pupils. They have identified which pupils did not attain the expected standard and have swiftly implemented appropriate support to help them catch up.
- Teachers use a good range and depth of questioning to explore pupils' answers. Teachers are confident and skilled to develop pupils' initial responses further through increasingly complex and probing questioning. This was seen in most subjects throughout the inspection, including in mathematics, English, design and technology, drama, geography and some science lessons, especially with the most able pupils.
- Literacy and reading are important at Attleborough Academy Norfolk. The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, read fluently and with confidence. They read both in and out of school, many choosing fiction, but some are more interested in non-fiction. They rapidly decode new, more difficult words. This is constantly widening their vocabulary. Those who are less confident with reading are helped to improve through an array of strategies, such as catch-up classes. These pupils are becoming increasingly confident to read and are able to use their new skills in their lessons.
- Homework is set regularly and used to enhance what pupils have learned in their lessons. All pupils said that they receive regular homework from almost all subjects and that this normally improved their learning from their lessons. The most able pupils commented that they felt that the homework was routinely challenging and helped them to either practise what they had learned, or learn new things effectively.
- The support and planning for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Most pupils, from their various starting points, are given tailored guidance about how to improve. Learning support assistants help pupils to overcome any misunderstandings so that they can participate and understand the lesson fully.

More than this, these pupils are integrated fully into their lessons, working co-operatively with their classmates to find the answers to teachers' questions, or in groups working collaboratively.

- The support for pupils who have an early understanding of the English language is thorough and ever-developing. Additional staff and resources are deployed to these pupils to ensure that they receive extra lessons to support their emerging language skills. Leaders recognise that they are going to need to continue to review this provision as there are an increasing number who join the school mid-way through the year.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to guide pupils with appropriate feedback, both oral and written, about how to improve. The pupils spoken to by inspectors appreciated the feedback that they got, understood what they needed to get better at in most lessons, and said that teachers helped them to improve their work.
- On occasion, teachers are not sharp enough to challenge the most able disadvantaged pupils to make even better progress so that they can achieve the highest grades, most notably in some of the English work seen during the inspection.
- Despite the appropriate efforts of the school team to recruit and train skilled teachers, there has been a shortage in some subject areas, most obviously science. This has resulted in some temporary teaching and/or leadership, which has not facilitated good learning and progress. Leaders have been resourceful in trying to resolve these issues, and while improvements are clear, teaching for the least and most able pupils does not yet consistently move at a rapid enough pace to help them catch up with their previous lost learning. Equally, the most able have only recently begun to access separate sciences, owing to staffing shortages.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils at Attleborough Academy Norfolk are well mannered, articulate and express themselves confidently. They hold doors open, are willing to help one another and are thoughtful about the needs of their peers.
- Pupils feel that they have a voice in the school community. Older pupils spoke about the importance of the 'School Council', who had listened to their concerns about many things. These concerns were taken seriously by the senior team and changes made in response to pupils' requests and concerns.
- The support for pupils in the specialist resource base (SRB) provides them with effective support. Staff create bespoke academic and pastoral programmes for each child. They provide good-quality teaching and support to pupils there, and carefully monitor their progress against their targets. In the main, most pupils successfully reintegrate back into their school and continue to thrive, having developed appropriate skills in the SRB. Schools and pupils are warm in their praise for the work that goes on in this provision.
- The support for pupils who access college courses as part of their key stage 4 qualifications is very good. All aspects of pupils' attendance, behaviour and learning are

monitored well. Liaison between the school and college is thorough. Pupils were complimentary in their praise for the school, not only for the quality of their college placement, which matched their aspirations, but also for ensuring that it helped them to achieve well in all areas of their studies.

- The work of the 'inclusion centre' and 'SAFE' team in supporting pupils is exemplary. Pupils and parents speak highly of this provision, where pupils go when they are concerned or have problems that they need help resolving. The work of the inclusion manager and designated teacher with those children who are looked after is particularly creditworthy. Pupils' personal education plans are detailed and ensure that pupils get a real 'voice' in their future. The targets set for these young people not only highlight how they can be supported personally, but also ensure that they have clear academic targets appropriately suited to their ability. The attendance, safety and progress of children who are looked after are monitored meticulously. Consequently, most children looked after's attendance is good, and where it is not, there are clear referrals in place, tenaciously being chased by school staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school site celebrates many of the pupils' achievements. Pupils' work is on display, celebrations of the 'Norfolk scholars' and destinations for ex-pupils are also around the site. This is all maintained well. Litter is very rare, classrooms are tidy and there is no graffiti.
- Pupils enjoy school and say that they feel well supported. Pupils say bullying is very rare. They report that any concerns of this kind are dealt with rapidly and effectively by staff. Most pupils and parents consider that behaviour at the school is good.
- Lessons are calm and purposeful. Most pupils work in harmony together, often automatically supporting one another when they are tackling something new or tricky. Behaviour is good and pupils say that the behaviour system works. However, not all pupils start the school with this mentality. Despite this, staff work hard to embed their high expectations with pupils. As time progresses, almost all pupils at Attleborough know the expectations of the staff and are members of the community.
- School information shows that overall attendance in 2015/16 was better than in 2014/15. The local authority say that the school 'go the extra mile' to chase poor attendance and evidence seen by inspectors shows that some pupils' attendance increases dramatically over time. However, even with the dogmatic work of leaders and staff, the attendance of some disadvantaged pupils, and those who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan, is still unlikely to meet national averages when they are published this year. Leaders and governors have marked this as a vital area for continued improvement and the training of staff in mental health needs is in response to many pupils who have poor attendance linked to this particular aspect.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2015, key stage 4 results rose sharply. The overall progress made by all pupils, especially those who were disadvantaged, was above national average. Specifically, the progress made by pupils in English and humanities was above the national average and

was broadly in line in mathematics and modern foreign languages. Although there are no national comparators yet published for 2016 results, school information and inspection evidence indicate that pupils in Year 11 last year made good progress from similar starting points, despite a dip in English results.

- At key stage 3, pupils are making good progress from their various starting points across many subjects, including English, mathematics, history, geography, French, German, drama, and design and technology. This is especially true for disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the least able.
- Reading is central to pupils' studies. It is given an emphasis in both curriculum and non-curriculum time. While some pupils enter the school with reading ages below their chronological age, the school swiftly implements support work to diminish those gaps quickly. This means that more pupils can access their curriculum content and achieve well. Equally, the most able pupils read extensively, and this supports their progress across a range of subjects.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good, and often better, progress from their starting points in both key stage 3 and 4. This is because leaders set meaningful academic and personal targets, pupils and parents are involved in pupils' support plans and teachers meet the needs of pupils in their lessons. Consequently, these pupils make friends, are supported to resolve their problems, are guided well in their learning and make good progress in many different aspects of their learning.
- The most able pupils make progress from their starting points across all year groups. They achieve well in a range of subjects at key stage 3 and 4, especially in mathematics. They go on to highly academic courses, either at the school or at local sixth-form provision, especially when they wish to take subjects that the school cannot currently offer. They are given significant support throughout key stage 4 to ensure that they are aspiring to key stage 5 courses that meet their interests and their ability. Leaders have recently reviewed their curriculum in order to offer better opportunities for these pupils to successfully study the separate sciences.
- In 2015, disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4 made progress in a range of subjects that was above national average. While there were some overall dips in English results in 2016, school evidence seen would indicate that disadvantaged pupils still made good progress from their starting points. At key stage 3, these pupils last year made good, and sometimes better progress from their starting points, most notably in English, mathematics, humanities and the creative subjects. Despite this, leaders have identified that most-able disadvantaged pupils in key stage 3 and 4 are not always making rapid enough progress to attain in line with non-disadvantaged pupils. In response to this, they have made it a focus of their pupil premium spending this year and have reviewed targets to ensure that there is a greater emphasis on the attainment of these pupils.
- Science, from a very low starting point, has made improvements in the last two years. After a turbulent period of staffing, science now has permanent staffing and leadership in place. Evidence from inspection of results and predictions over the last two years, indicates that assessments and predictions are now more accurate. Current school information, and some intensive scrutiny on inspection, shows that science is improving, but more teaching needs to ensure that pupils making even quicker progress, if they are to fill in the gaps from previous teaching.

- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next stage. The curriculum provides guidance to pupils from Year 7 through to the sixth form about careers and destinations for the future. Consequently, post-16 and post-18 destinations have improved over the last two years. School information shows that all pupils have secured appropriate training, further education or employment, with almost all of them sustaining these places. An increasing number of pupils have accessed apprenticeships in 2015/16. Leaders are also investing heavily in creating new links with businesses through their 'aspiration academy', to give even greater opportunities to those pupils who wish to go into the workplace and acquire appropriate skills.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The curriculum meets the needs of students. While A-level provision is well embedded, leaders have also successfully established a curriculum pathway for students who need a more tailored programme of study. Students on the 'access' courses in the school are being given a programme which enables them to resit English and/or mathematics, take a level 2 or 3 course which may be challenging, as well as undertake weekly work experience that matches their aspirations for the future.
- Students have access to appropriate courses and those who wish to take courses that are not available at the school get access to these at local colleges with specialist facilities. Leaders are continually developing courses to suit the ever-changing needs of their cohorts, especially their mixed vocational provision. Leaders are currently developing greater links with businesses through their 'aspiration academy', which will be designed to give students in the future more access to training and apprenticeships in the workplace.
- Teaching is good. Teachers know their subject content and examination syllabuses well and plan to meet the needs of a range of students in their classes. Students develop increasing independence in their learning through expectations and monitoring of their folders and books. The feedback, both written and verbal, that they receive actively helps them to improve and is pertinent to them as an individual. Equally, the recent employment of a personal tutor in the sixth form to support students to make the most of the individual study time between and after lessons is already ensuring that students are better prepared for lessons.
- Personal development and welfare in the sixth form is good. Students are happy, responsible and feel well supported and safe. They partake in the school 'presidential council', undertake community and charity events and undertake work-related learning and/or work experience that is in line with their aspirations or current courses. They are taught how to stay healthy and safe in the community and wider world. The pastoral programme also builds on their previous experiences to ensure that they develop even greater understanding about the importance of democracy and the right to vote. As a result, these students are very well prepared to be active adults in the community by the time that they leave the sixth form.
- Students are well prepared for the next stages in their education, training or employment. Leaders have worked hard over the last two years to improve the quality of the information, advice and guidance given to students. Consequently, students not only move on to appropriate courses and training when they leave the sixth form, but they also have the resilience to see these choices through. This has resulted in an

increase in the numbers of students, especially those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are securing and sustaining their next steps over the last two years.

- Those students who resit English and mathematics are being given access to high-quality teaching and support. In 2014/15, both English and mathematics were at or above the national averages for those who improved their grade when they resat the GCSE examination. It is likely that they will be above national averages again in 2015/16, when these are published. However, leaders are clear that the national averages are not an aspirational enough measure for students, and they continue to review their provision to look at even more effective ways to ensure that students achieve well in these resits.
- Students in the sixth form make progress overall that is broadly in line with national averages. Some leaders are new in post, but they have already undertaken a thorough self-evaluation of the provision and are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders have rightly acknowledged that some of their monitoring systems are not always as efficient as they could be in identifying underperforming or struggling students as quickly as they could, especially in some AS levels, such as media studies. This would allow students to make even better progress from their starting points.

School details

Unique reference number	140534
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10019581

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

Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	837
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frances Harrod
Principal	Neil McShane
Telephone number	01953452335
Website	https://aan.norfolk.sch.uk/
Email address	office@aan.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department of Education guidance on what academies should publish on their website.
- Attleborough Academy Norfolk became an academy in January 2014 with the Norfolk Academies Trust.
- The school is smaller than the average secondary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage, with a small but increasing proportion from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium (government

funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after) is below national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, with a statement or an education, health and care plan, is above national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities without a statement or an education, health and care plan is below national average.
- The school does not use alternative provision. It does have a small number of pupils who access Easton College, Norfolk, to study accredited courses as part of their curriculum provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school manages a special resource base for pupils with special educational needs with social, emotional, mental health needs. This provides short-term support for pupils from other local schools. There are currently no pupils from Attleborough using this provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 40 lessons or parts of lessons. Inspectors also visited tutor sessions, and an assembly.
- Meetings were held with the principal, a number of nominated senior and middle leaders, a representative from the trust and sponsor, the chair of the local governing body and the newly qualified teachers in the school. The lead inspector held telephone meetings with a representative from the local authority and the chair of the trust governing body. Another inspector had a telephone conversation with a local school leader who currently sends pupils to the special resource provision.
- Pupils' views were sought between classes, during lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Groups of pupils, and students in the sixth form, also met formally with inspectors. Inspectors listened to pupils from key stage 3 read and discussed their reading experiences with them.
- Inspectors also scrutinised work from mathematics, English, science and humanities.
- Inspectors also met with some pupils who attend Easton College as part of their curriculum provision, as well as observing the work in the special resource base.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, action planning documents, minutes of governors meetings, external evaluations, safeguarding records, pupil progress information, and school policies and procedures.
- Inspectors also spoke to a range of staff about their understanding of the most up-to-date safeguarding guidance and school procedures and protocols.
- Inspectors analysed 69 responses to Parent View, the online survey provided to parents by Ofsted, 111 responses to Pupil View and 53 responses to staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors scrutinised the various forms of communication the school uses, including the website and information sent to and from parents and other stakeholders.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop	Ofsted Inspector
Ed Powell	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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