

Stalham Academy

Old Yarmouth Road, Stalham, Norwich, Norfolk NR12 9PS

Inspection dates

24–25 November 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The head of school is very well respected by pupils, parents and staff; he has worked hard to create a popular and effective school.
- Governors are highly ambitious for the school, and their purposeful leadership has enabled improvements to be made quickly and efficiently.
- Senior leaders check rigorously on how well pupils are learning. These actions have a clear impact on classroom practice so that standards continue to rise.
- The school spends additional money wisely for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils make good progress and catch up well.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff and governors are vigilant in maintaining pupils' safety and welfare. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, including when using the internet.
- Pupils make good progress across the curriculum, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers make good use of cooperative learning activities – a hallmark of the school's approach – to help pupils deepen their understanding and practise their communication skills.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations about what pupils can achieve, especially in English and mathematics.
- The roles and responsibilities of subject leaders are not clear enough and this means that, in subjects other than English and mathematics, standards are inconsistent. Pupils' work in these areas can sometimes lack depth and attention to detail.
- There is not a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting. This means that pupils' work is sometimes untidy.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and they appreciate the additional responsibilities they are given. Pupils are respectful and polite and they enjoy coming to school.
- Support staff who work in classrooms make an important contribution to the progress that pupils make, particularly those pupils who need additional support.
- In some lessons, teachers do not give the most able pupils challenging work quickly enough. On these occasions, the most able pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- Pupils enjoy participating in a broad range of cultural activities, such as the recent Year 5 production of Julius Caesar.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by empowering subject leaders to play a greater role in monitoring and raising standards in their area of responsibility.
- Improve outcomes by:
 - raising standards in pupils' handwriting
 - improving the quality of pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers challenge the most able pupils with work that stretches them to think hard throughout the whole lesson.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since his appointment, the head of school has worked diligently in order to raise standards, improve the quality of teaching and establish clear expectations about pupils' behaviour. This has ensured that the school's reputation among parents and in the wider community has improved significantly over the last two and a half years.
- Parents and governors speak warmly about the effective senior leadership team. Parents confirm that together, the head of school and his deputy have transformed the school into a happy, thriving, successful community in a relatively short period of time.
- Senior leaders check carefully on how well pupils are learning by undertaking a detailed analysis of assessment information and by gathering a wide range of evidence about progress. The head of school and his deputy have made significant improvements to teaching in the light of their findings. For example, their 'cooperative learning' approach is successfully used in every classroom to help pupils embed deeper understanding and improve communication skills. Leaders' increased emphasis on developing pupils' mathematical reasoning has successfully led to improved outcomes for pupils.
- The improvements introduced by the trust have transformed the school into a successful, popular academy which is well respected by parents and the local community.
- The formal management of teachers' performance is securely focused on improving teachers' current practice and makes an effective contribution to improving the school. Staff value the professional development that the school provides, and senior leaders are not afraid to hold teachers to account for their performance.
- Senior leaders have rightly been focusing on improving standards in English and mathematics as a matter of priority. Leaders of other subjects have not become so fully involved in monitoring standards in their areas of responsibility. As a result, the depth and quality of pupils' work in some subjects such as geography, religious education and history are not as high as they could be.
- School leaders develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils gain a sense of community and responsibility through their enthusiastic engagement in activities such as raising £204 for Macmillan Cancer Support at a coffee morning. The recent Year 3 Christmas art café benefited pupils by enabling them to work together with their parents to make decorations for the local church.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced and equips pupils well for the next stages of education. Enterprise is a theme running through the curriculum, as demonstrated recently when pupils raised money to fund their own visit to a theme park. Culture days about China and France, together with a good range of clubs including for art, cookery, table football and music, ensure that the curriculum is interesting and engaging. Year 4 pupils have the opportunity to take part in a short residential visit to a local outdoor learning centre where they participate in a range of environmental activities including den-building and orienteering.

- Pupils learned about democracy with their own EU referendum recently and they are taught to understand about British values in their work about tolerance and respect for others.
- Leaders use the physical education and sport funding well. They have employed specialist sports coaches who help to develop pupils' key skills. Pupils develop their love of sport and fitness in the school's own purpose-built sports hall. Year 4 pupils are able to go swimming on a regular basis. Year 6 pupils spend a week at a residential centre where they experience a large number of adventurous activities including climbing and abseiling.
- School leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to support pupils during whole-class teaching, small-group work and one-to-one support. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Senior leaders' planning for school improvement is precise and effective and they have correctly identified the most important priorities for improvement. Senior leaders regularly monitor the impact of actions taken, which has led to rapid improvement over a relatively short period of time.
- School staff tackle any issues of discrimination well and foster good relationships with parents. This promotes equality of opportunity and contributes to a harmonious and friendly school. Parents commented on how quickly and effectively action was taken if any problems were reported.
- Parents strongly appreciate the work of leaders, teachers and support staff. The overwhelming majority of parents are positive about the school, recognising the enormous number of improvements introduced over the last two years. As one parent said, 'I cannot fault the school in any way. Mr Russell and the class teachers are amazing.' The head of school keeps parents well informed through regular newsletters, by updating news items on the school's website, and through the school's social media account.

Governance of the school

- Governors, under the skilful leadership of the highly experienced chair of the governing body, have led the rapid and significant improvement of this school since it became an academy. They responded quickly and strategically to appoint high-quality senior leaders. They have supported and challenged these leaders to bring about much-needed improvements to teaching and behaviour. As a result of these actions, standards have risen. Governance is undoubtedly a strength of the school.
- Governors are well trained and put their professional skills to good use. Individual governors lead aspects of the school's work well, for example, in relation to training and safeguarding. The presence of trust personnel on the governing body has increased its capacity for informed, specialised leadership in areas such as attainment and data. As a result, there is now an impressive range of leadership skills throughout the governing body.
- Governors hold senior leaders to account for the progress pupils make. Governors challenge staff performance through an effective performance management system.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained in all essential aspects of child protection, including the government's 'Prevent' duty. As a result, staff are aware of their responsibilities to keep pupils safe and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being.
- The deputy headteacher takes the lead role in managing safeguarding procedures. He keeps detailed and accurate records of any safeguarding concerns and ensures that, when appropriate, information is shared with the relevant external agencies. The school has developed a secure filing system that includes a useful case chronology that is kept up to date. This enables external agencies and school staff to review quickly what actions have taken place. Leaders are persistent when they are concerned for a pupil's well-being and challenge the appropriate agencies where necessary.
- Parents and pupils say that the school keeps everyone safe, and inspection evidence supports these views.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers make consistently good use of the school's cooperative learning techniques. These ensure that pupils understand new concepts as they are introduced, and help them apply their learning, for example to solve word problems in mathematics.
- Teachers ensure that pupils learn from their mistakes and think carefully about how they can improve their own work. Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to assess their own work and to make supportive comments about their peers' achievements so that they are helping each other to learn. Teachers mark pupils' work in line with school policy.
- A specialist teacher for music ensures that pupils learn to play percussion instruments and sing to a good standard. Pupils also learn about composing music.
- Science is a growing strength of the school. One class teacher is also a science specialist, and senior leaders have made good use of her expertise to plan science work using the school's well-equipped science lab.
- Teachers have a high expectation of what pupils can achieve in English and mathematics but this is not always shown in other subjects. As a result, pupils' work in other subjects is not of such high quality. Also, handwriting skills are not consistently good, and this means that pupils do not present their work as well as they could.
- Teachers provide more challenging work for the most able pupils. However, sometimes this harder work is only presented towards the end of the lesson, and many of these pupils are capable of thinking harder throughout the whole lesson.

- Pupils talk excitedly about their learning. For example, a Year 6 pupil talked enthusiastically about reading and said, 'We have a challenge called "The Great Reading Bingo Challenge" where we have to read many different types of books'. Pupils who struggle to read have very good support to practise their skills and are proud of the progress they make.
- Teachers provide effective learning opportunities and questions that closely match the needs of the pupils. For example, in a Year 5 class, a teacher's effective questions enabled groups of pupils to apply their knowledge of place-value to help them solve problems about money and weight.
- Classroom support staff make a positive contribution to lessons, particularly for those pupils who need additional support in their learning. Support staff work in partnership with teachers, using appropriate teaching resources and asking questions effectively to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Sometimes, support staff teach parts of the lessons, allowing the teacher to teach a group of pupils in greater depth.
- Classroom support staff teach intervention groups, and these valuable, additional programmes make a good contribution to learning. These sessions help some pupils to catch up, and ensure that others do not fall behind in English or mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff and governors are successful in ensuring that the school provides a safe and nurturing environment in which pupils can flourish and succeed. As a result, pupils are friendly, thoughtful and respectful.
- The school council is involved in many aspects of school life. School councillors serve on the learning group, the healthy-eating group or the safety group. They take their responsibilities seriously and take pride in their achievements. The safety group recently reminded other pupils about the importance of keeping their coat pegs and changing rooms clean and tidy.
- Pupil ambassadors represent the school on many formal and informal occasions; they show visitors around the school, take a leading role in special assemblies and provide good role models for behaviour and good conduct. Pupils are respectful and responsible as a result of the experiences that are provided and the good levels of responsibility they are given.
- Pupils are well mannered, friendly and confident. In the classroom, pupils have the self-assurance to put forward their point of view, and to challenge others politely but confidently. At the same time, inspectors saw work which resulted from pupils imagining what it was like to be a historical character, or someone very different from themselves.

- Pupils know how to stay safe in and out of school, including when using the internet. Pupils confidently told inspectors about e-safety and were keen to share their understanding, telling inspectors 'not to share personal details with anyone online' and 'to keep our passwords safe'. Teachers promote e-safety on a regular basis.
- Parents agree that staff give personal development and welfare a high priority. One parent commented, 'they always go the extra mile to teach about responsibility, children can bring money for healthy snacks and are rightly expected to look after it themselves'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It has improved considerably over the last two years in response to more challenging teaching and leaders' insistence on high standards of conduct.
- The school is an orderly environment and pupils walk calmly and sensibly around the school, entering and leaving lessons and assembly with due regard for school rules.
- Leaders and staff know the pupils well and take any misdemeanours seriously. Pupils understand the sanctions and rewards systems thoroughly and regularly refer to school rules to check their conduct. Expectations are high and pupils are quick to remind others if they are not behaving appropriately. Pupils are generally very courteous to one another and to adults.
- While most pupils behave well during most lessons, some do become inattentive at times. These incidents of low-level misbehaviour, while infrequent, detract from the quality of learning in the classrooms when they occur.
- Senior leaders act swiftly and effectively to address any reported incidents of bullying, derogatory language or racist comments. Senior leaders keep thorough information about pupils' behaviour, and their timely interventions regarding poor behaviour have a positive impact.
- Pupils' attendance is above average and they told inspectors that they enjoy attending school. School attendance staff are proactive in supporting families where attendance becomes an issue, and they work positively with families and pupils to promote good attendance. As a result of this vigilance, the number of pupils who are persistently absent is low. Staff celebrate high attendance, for example, by awarding certificates.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the school converted to an academy, outcomes for pupils have improved considerably. In the most recently published school performance tables, progress in reading and writing at the end of Year 6 at Stalham Academy was in the top 10% of all primary schools nationally. Progress in mathematics was significantly above average.
- According to the school's own tracking system, supported by evidence seen in workbooks, pupils currently in the school continue to make good progress. Nevertheless, there is a slight legacy of underachievement in some year groups. Senior leaders and governors are well aware of this, and plans are in place to ensure that by the time they leave the school, these pupils will have had the chance to catch up.

- Recent test results, together with inspection evidence, show that disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with that of other pupils nationally. A detailed examination of disadvantaged pupils' exercise books, including the most able disadvantaged, shows that their strong progress matches that of the other pupils in the class. There is good evidence that the school has successfully used the pupil premium grant to help them overcome any barriers to learning that they have faced.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, starting in Year 3, where staff quickly identify their additional needs and how these can best be met. The special educational needs coordinator measures the impact of intervention programmes, ensuring that pupils make good progress.
- Outcomes in subjects other than English and mathematics are inconsistent. Pupils' work in their cross-curricular books, especially in geography, history and religious education, is not as detailed or comprehensive as work in other areas. Teachers do not always have the same high expectations of what pupils can achieve in these other subjects. Nevertheless, some high-quality work was seen, particularly in a topic on the Second World War where pupils were debating the merits of resisting the occupying army in Europe.
- Outcomes in writing for pupils currently in the school are also inconsistent. This is largely due to the poor handwriting of many pupils, and also because grammar, punctuation and spelling work is not fully embedded in learning across the whole curriculum.
- The most able pupils make good progress. However, they are capable of doing even better. They are not given sufficiently challenging work throughout the whole lesson to enable them to achieve their potential. Senior leaders are rightly ambitious to move outcomes from good to outstanding, and expecting even more from the most able children is one way they plan to accomplish this.

School details

Unique reference number	140819
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10025581

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Cook
Head of School	Glenn Russell
Telephone number	01692 580053
Website	www.stalhamacademy.co.uk
Email address	head@stalhamacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Stalham Academy is an average-sized junior school with eight classes.
- Stalham Academy became part of the Rightforsuccess Academy Trust when it converted to become an academy in May 2014.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 16 lessons. A number of these lessons were visited jointly with the head of school. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to lessons as part of learning walks throughout the school.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They met a group of pupils to gain their views of the school as well as speaking to pupils and parents informally.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime, in assembly, at the start of the school day and in lessons.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including: assessments and records of pupils' progress; the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance; records of how teaching is managed; minutes of governing body meetings; the school's self-evaluation information; and the school's improvement plans.
- Inspectors held meetings with the head of school, the deputy headteacher (who is also the subject leader for English and the special educational needs coordinator), middle leaders and classroom support staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. Three of these governors, including the chair, also represented the academy trust.
- Inspectors took account of the 97 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the five staff questionnaire responses and the school's own recent pupil views questionnaire.

Inspection team

Nick Rudman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Henry Weir

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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