

Nelson Academy

Nursery Road, Downham Market, Norfolk PE38 9PF

Inspection dates

30 November–1 December 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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have successfully embedded a culture of aspiration and achievement. Consequently, pupils are now making good progress across the key stages.
- There has been a continuing rise in pupils' achievement. This is because teaching is more effective and pupils are now making good progress from their various starting points.
- The resource base run by the school serves the requirements of pupils effectively. Pupils receive support that is tailored to their specific needs, well monitored and ensures that these pupils make good progress.
- The early years provision is good. Children receive high-quality teaching and make good progress from often low starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making rapid progress in most year groups as a result of high-quality teaching and support. Over time, their outcomes have got better and are still improving.
- Most-able pupils, including disadvantaged most-able pupils, receive effective support. This is successfully ensuring that more pupils are working towards achieving the highest standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are strengths of the school. Attendance is good and pupils receive excellent care and individualised support to help them feel secure. As a result, pupils are ready to access their learning.
- Pupils know how to stay safe in different situations. They feel very secure in school because they know that members of staff care for them and will look after them well.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn. They value their education, attend well, behave and respect one another.
- Despite marked improvements in teaching, there is still a small amount of weaker teaching in some areas.
- In the school there is a lack of clarity about some middle leadership roles and responsibilities following the recent reorganisation.
- Leaders' monitoring of assessment in some subjects and year groups is not always sharp enough to ensure that pupils make the consistently rapid progress of which they are capable.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop leadership and management by:
 - further refining and making consistent the school's pupil progress assessment system, ensuring that the monitoring of the curriculum and assessment in all year groups is as thorough as the best examples in the school
 - providing clarity over middle leadership roles throughout the school, so that leaders understand their roles and responsibilities and know how these roles interact with each other
 - making sure that those new to post are given appropriate training to ensure that they are as good as the more experienced staff members.
- Ensure that the small amount of weaker teaching in the school is eradicated.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The previous headteacher, the new acting principal, the trust's education director, the assistant headteachers and governors have acted collectively to raise standards in the school since it became an academy in January 2014. The predecessor school's achievement and low aspiration are a thing of the past. Ambitious, determined leadership has brought about a rapid journey of improvement in achievement, behaviour and teaching.
- The trust has supported the school to make improvements effectively. The work of the trust's central services team for finance and human resources has ensured that leaders can focus on achievement. The collaboration between the trust's schools has also ensured that leaders are able to moderate with a range of other professionals to assess pupils accurately against the new national standards in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Phase leaders are accurate in their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the provision. These leaders show a strong sense of purpose and a sound knowledge of the skills that pupils need to be successful. As a result, pupils are making good progress from their starting points in each key stage.
- Leaders use an array of information to hold staff to account for the achievement of pupils. This information helps leaders to make decisions about staff pay and progression. It also supports leaders to ensure that staff share their best practice and plan for learning together. Consequently, most teaching is good, across the curriculum.
- Pupils access a broad curriculum through their 'topic work'. This work ensures that pupils learn about science, art, music, geography and much more, in an interesting and engaging way. Displays around the school exhibit pupils' achievement. Pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular provision. From the Reception class 'colouring club', through to the upper school's singing clubs, pupils enjoy a range of different extra-curricular opportunities that contribute to their learning experience.
- On occasions, where teaching is weaker, topic work is not sufficiently engaging to ensure that pupils make the rapid progress of which they are capable. Leaders acknowledge that their assessment processes for aspects of the curriculum are not yet as well embedded as in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The curriculum places a strong emphasis on British values such as respect, tolerance, diversity and inclusion. Displays, assemblies and lessons consistently promote these aspects to pupils. Leaders use their house-point system to embed the values of community and partnership among pupils. Consequently, pupils say that the school is a place where it is safe to be different and that staff help you to understand and appreciate everyone around you.
- Leaders use the additional funding effectively to support the large number of disadvantaged pupils. Governors meticulously check that they do so. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because they receive targeted support, particularly in speech and language, to help them catch up or, in the case of the most able among them, to extend and deepen their learning further.

- Additional government funding to support physical education (PE) and sport is spent well, providing a specialist PE teacher to coach and support teachers teaching PE. This is successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning of PE. Investment in competitions and sport is serving to improve pupils' participation in sporting activity across the school. As a result, pupils say that they enjoy sport and one pupil said, 'taking part in different physical things is a good way to stay healthy and fit'.
- The director of education for the trust has ensured that leadership remains consistent while the school seeks a substantive principal. The director of education has supported the acting principal in her role, while ensuring that other leaders are being given opportunities to develop in their respective roles. However, some responsibilities for leadership positions in the school are not as clear as others. This results in some leaders being unclear about what they are accountable for. Leaders and governors acknowledge that further clarity is needed about the roles and responsibilities of all leaders in the school.
- Parents are very positive about the school's work. Overwhelmingly, parents spoken to and those who completed the online questionnaire and text service said that, 'the academy and staff have made huge steps in moving the school forward'. One parent said, 'the school is constantly improving and quickly. It responds positively to parents' comments and the team has injected a really positive "can do" attitude and atmosphere into the school'.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has recruited staff skilfully to ensure that they have expertise from a range of different sectors including education, further education, health and finance. They use this expertise effectively to hold leaders to account, especially with regard to checking how the additional funding they receive is spent and on how pupils are performing against national expectations. They are proactively working with other schools to raise the aspirations for pupils in the local community, beyond Nelson Academy.
- The governing body uses the information that it has about the school to challenge the senior team about how well pupils are progressing. Governors visit the school regularly and use this information in their meetings to interrogate the evidence provided by leaders. They use information from parental surveys and parent focus groups to make changes to the school's provision. In this way, governors have engaged parents to support leaders to improve pupils' achievement.
- Governors are aware of their statutory responsibilities, including those linked to the safeguarding of pupils. Governors are knowledgeable and undertake checks to ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective. They understand the importance of safety when recruiting staff and are well trained in this area. Governors use this knowledge when they support leaders to interview and appoint staff to the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Records of checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are thorough and meet all requirements.
- Staff are trained regularly in the most up-to-date guidance, including training in the 'Prevent' duty, which supports the work of staff in identifying pupils who are vulnerable to radicalisation or extremism. Staff are confident in making referrals where they have concerns about pupils and these referrals are dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner. The designated safeguarding leaders, including the student support officer, work well with the numerous external agencies involved in different pupils' care and well-being.
- Leaders ensure that the case files of pupils are detailed and up to date and that support staff have an accurate overview of pupils' safeguarding. Leaders' central recording systems for safeguarding ensure that pupils receive support quickly, including the introduction of early-help assessments, when needed.
- Pupils feel safe at Nelson Academy and their parents agree. They say that bullying is rare and that where it does occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and in the wider community. For example, some pupils undertake roles as 'digital leaders' to promote online safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved since the academy opened and is now typically good. Consequently, over time, most pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Teachers work together to check that pupils' work is marked accurately, both within their school and through working with other schools in the trust. Teachers are aware of pupils' starting points and use these to plan learning that meets their needs. Teachers are using their regular tests to provide them with information about where pupils are falling behind or need to catch up.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers use their subject knowledge and effective questioning to plan learning activities and set work at the right level. This helps pupils develop their skills and knowledge. This is particularly the case for the most able, whereby pupils' books over time show that teachers provide effective challenge to deepen and extend pupils' thinking.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils helps them to improve their work. Teachers give pupils opportunities to re-shape or correct pieces of work, which enables them to make good progress in their lessons. Pupils exhibit a lot of pride in the presentation and completion of their work. Many pupils were very keen to show inspectors their work and went out of their way to do so.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils, which helps ensure that learning is purposeful and productive. In lessons, there is a calm and focused learning environment where pupils enjoy their learning. Learning displays are used effectively by pupils as prompts in their learning. For example, in one lesson, the teacher routinely referred to the punctuation and vocabulary guides that pupils access independently when they need to check their answers.

- Most teachers are confident and skilled to extend pupils' initial responses to questions. Effective use of questioning encourages pupils to think out reasoned explanations for their answers. For example, in mathematics lessons, pupils are always asked to explain how they came to an answer. Pupils' books show evidence that they have the opportunity to apply their skills to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Reading is taught well across the curriculum and pupils are encouraged to read. Generally, pupils say that they enjoy reading and that they read for pleasure in and out of school. The most able pupils read complex texts confidently and fluently. Pupils are being supported well so that they are confident to attempt new words and apply strategies to help themselves when they come across more tricky words in their reading. Parents enjoy the number of 'story cafés' the school runs. This gives pupils a chance to demonstrate their knowledge and parents say that it helps them to support their child's reading at home. Pupils apply their phonics knowledge well and their progress is good from their different starting points.
- Support and planning for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are effective. For example, in the school's specialist resource base, the learning environment is warm and vibrant and encourages pupils to have pride in themselves and their work. Pupils access a range of multi-sensory provision throughout the week, which supports them to make progress in their well-being and their learning. Pupils access a broad variety of subjects and enjoy the topic-based cross-curricular work. Teaching assistants are adept at using their knowledge of pupils to ensure that any behavioural issues are managed in a calm and reasoned way. This ensures that pupils make consistent and sustained improvements in their learning and personal development.
- While teaching is typically good, leaders acknowledge that there is still some less effective teaching in the school. In these lessons, pupils are not being given work that is at the right level and this slows their progress. Where teaching is weaker, pupils become disengaged and do not make the best use of their learning time to make the best progress they can.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are happy, courteous and friendly. They are active members of their community and enjoy being members of their respective house teams. Typically, pupils wear their uniform with pride, particularly Year 6 pupils who, 'feel very special in blazers' and like belonging to Nelson Academy.

- Pupils support one another and work together well. Members of the school council are incredibly positive about how staff listen to them and take a real interest in their views. Pupils show care and empathy for one another and show respect to staff and visitors. Pupils learn to manage relationships well because staff model positive conversations with pupils when they need to resolve disputes or problems. One pupil said, 'If children struggle to work with others in a way that isn't nice, teachers sit them down and see if something is happening they are not happy about.'
- The majority of parents are effusive in their praise of the school. Parents are very positive and appreciate the improvements that have occurred since the school became an academy, especially the care and guidance given to their children. One parent said, 'Nelson is a friendly, approachable place where nothing is too much trouble even if it is something at home, they will listen because they know it will help the children. I am proud my children attend Nelson Academy.'
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their school and their learning. Most are confident learners who can articulate their learning well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils conduct themselves well and show self-discipline. They move around corridors calmly and understand the staff's expectations when, for example, they enter and leave assembly. Pupils respect their learning environment. Displays are well maintained, stimulating and attractive.
- Pupils take responsibility for their conduct. Staff use the behaviour systems consistently to support pupils to make the right choices in various situations. There is a small number of pupils who do not exhibit good behaviour regularly and/or repeat the same poor behaviours. Leaders are aware of this. Analysis of behaviour logs demonstrates that a range of strategies is being successfully implemented to reduce the risk of distracting other pupils while they are working.
- Attendance of pupils in the school is improving. The school's overall attendance figure improved in 2016 and is better than the national average. The school's autumn term attendance for current pupils shows that attendance has risen again. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are now attending school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils are good because the quality of teaching and learning ensures that pupils make at least good progress from their different starting points. This is also the case because leaders have been very scrupulous in supporting any pupil who needs to catch up to achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, and implementing appropriate, individualised support to achieve this. As a result, pupils who were falling behind are rapidly catching up in every year group.

- Leaders check on the performance of specific groups of pupils very closely, particularly where they may be at risk of underperformance. Leaders meet with teachers regularly to ensure that any concerns about pupils' progress are addressed promptly. As a result, current school information shows that all groups of pupils, including the most able, achieve well.
- Children in the early years make good progress from low starting points. By the time they leave Reception, the majority of children are well prepared for their transition into Year 1.
- In Year 1, pupils achieve well in phonics, compared with others nationally. Pupils develop a good understanding of phonics because this is taught well, right from Nursery and Reception. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the Year 1 national phonics screening check is above average. By the end of key stage 1, pupils are achieving at least in line with, or better than, the national average.
- Outcomes by the end of Year 2 are good. Pupils make good progress overall to achieve at least the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- By the end of key stage 2, the attainment of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is rapidly improving. In 2016, pupils made significantly better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, those pupils left Nelson Academy well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The school's support for disadvantaged pupils, including those who are also most able, has been effective in helping them access what the school offers for both their academic and their personal and social needs. As a result, they make good progress, and the differences between them and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally are rapidly diminishing.
- Most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics because of the individualised, targeted support they receive. School leaders ensure that the progress of this vulnerable group is monitored closely, making certain that appropriate support plans are in place for those pupils that need them.
- The most able pupils achieve well and this is because work is set at the right level to deepen their thinking and teachers have high expectations of them. In mathematics, pupils are challenged by open-ended questions that require considerable thought and application of their mathematical skills. In reading, they choose more advanced books; they express a view about different authors or particular genres and can discuss a text in depth. Pupils extend their skills further by applying their grammar, punctuation and spelling effectively in various contexts and types of writing.
- Pupils develop good skills across a range of subjects. They recognise and understand how learning in one subject can help them in another. For example, key stage 2 pupils were writing letters to families from the front line in the trenches and using their English grammar and punctuation skills to check their work.
- Pupils are achieving well in their learning at every key stage. Consequently, at Reception, Year 2 and Year 6, children and pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of early years is good. Leaders and staff have established a caring environment where routines reinforce children's learning and provide a safe environment. The leader knows the strengths and areas to develop in the provision and exhibits a passion and energy to continue to raise standards for children.
- Children access a stimulating learning environment, indoors and outdoors, and benefit from a range of resources which they treat with respect. Adults skilfully engage children with resources and activities, and use questions well to deepen children's understanding and learning. For example, children had pictures of various creatures with numerous legs and were asked, 'How many creatures are there?'; 'How many legs altogether?'; and 'How many legs on three creatures?'. To extend further, a more complex question, 'How many combinations can you have to make...?' encouraged children to think in a different way to use their knowledge, and give their answers.
- Children are well behaved and respond well to teachers' high expectations. Children are considerate and share well with each other. Staff intervene where necessary to support children to make the right choices. Consequently, children build positive relationships with one another and with the adults around them.
- Staff communicate and work effectively with parents. Parents are involved in their child's learning by, for example, contributing with 'WOW moment' forms, sharing the topic books and learning story books. This information is used by staff to gain an accurate understanding of what children know and can do. Parents are pleased with their children's progress in Reception.
- Children's communication is a central part of the curriculum in the early years. Children are given numerous creative opportunities, which allow them to develop their ability to write and develop the shapes of their letters. For example, in the construction area, children have writing 'tool belts' so they feel like builders and are encouraged to write, even when building. This is enabling children to apply their learning in various contexts to practise their skills. Consequently, all children are becoming more proficient in their writing and making good progress from their starting points.
- Children are given well-planned opportunities to develop their independent skills in cutting, sticking, writing and painting, alongside their writing development. They can explain how they have developed their skills in these areas and are proud to show people their work. This work is well recorded in high-quality learning journals where adults track children's achievements with care. Children are proud to point out their work on the walls and in displays.
- The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in 2015 and 2016 was slightly lower than the national average. However, children join Reception with a wide variety of abilities and a number of children have starting points that are below those typical for their age. From these starting points, children make good progress. The leader for the early years has accurately identified those children who are at risk of falling behind and gives them extra help to ensure that they make good progress.

School details

Unique reference number	140363
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10019587

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	374
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Melanie Wellard
Acting principal	Sarah Wilson
Telephone number	01366 383824
Website	http://nelsonacademy.co.uk
Email address	office@nelsonacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Nelson Academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- This was the first inspection since the school converted to academy status in January 2014 and became Nelson Academy. The school is part of the College of West Anglia multi-academy trust.
- Following the retirement of the substantive headteacher, an interim leadership arrangement is in place, which is supported by the trust's director of education.
- The school has a 10-place specialist resource base provision, specifically to support children who have autism spectrum disorder.
- The school has a Nursery class, with a morning and afternoon session each day.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and require special educational needs support is below the national average.

- The number of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes and year groups across the school at least once, observing teaching and learning, talking to pupils and assessing the quality of their work. The acting principal and the assistant headteachers accompanied some classroom visits.
- Inspectors observed an assembly. They also joined Year 3 and Year 6 'story cafés' held during the inspection, where they talked to parents.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents, the director of education, the acting principal and the three assistant headteachers. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body, accompanied by two other governors.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of pupils' work, including English, mathematics and topic books. They also heard pupils read and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents by talking to them before and after school and taking into account the 39 texts received from parents and 60 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors took into account the 42 responses of staff, using the online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and attendance. They looked at minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of visits by the academy trust, subject leader files, leaders' monitoring and evaluation, information about pupils' outcomes provided by the school, the school's self-evaluation of its own performance and the school's improvement planning.
- The lead inspector analysed the school's website information and the academy trust's scheme of delegation and funding agreement.

Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
James Adkins	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Ofsted Inspector

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