

Ernulf Academy

Barford Road, Eynesbury, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 2SH

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils of all abilities, but especially disadvantaged pupils, did not achieve well enough in most of their subjects in 2016.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils had little impact on raising their levels of achievement in 2016.
- Not all teachers plan learning that meets pupils' needs sufficiently. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of, especially the most able, are too low.
- A very small minority of pupils disrupt the learning of others.
- Information about pupils' performance has not been accurate enough, especially for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders have not had a sufficiently clear picture of pupils' progress and have not held subject leaders to account for the outcomes achieved by pupils in their subjects.
- Absence rates are falling but remain too high, especially for some disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Careers information, advice and guidance is not strong enough in key stage 3.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher, leadership team and the trust, demonstrate the capacity to bring about improvements.
- Senior leaders and governors now have a far clearer understanding of what they have to do to improve the school.
- Senior leaders' monitoring and support is improving teaching consistently. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated. New staff add momentum to leaders' drive to make teaching consistently good.
- Intensive support provided for Year 11 pupils is boosting their confidence and understanding.
- New assessment procedures show that current pupils' outcomes are improving well. A greater proportion of pupils at both key stages are now making the progress of which they are capable.
- The school is calm and orderly. Pupils are polite and respectful and most behave well.
- Effective arrangements to educate a small minority of pupils off site enable pupils to remain successfully in learning.
- Effective procedures to safeguard pupils are firmly in place.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan learning that meets the needs of pupils sufficiently
 - strengthening pupils' literacy skills, especially in key stage 3
 - eradicating low-level disruption from a small minority of pupils
 - checking pupils' work regularly to make sure pupils are working hard enough and understand the topics they are studying.
- Improve pupils' progress and attainment across the school by:
 - accelerating pupils' progress from their various starting points; most notably disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of, especially the most able pupils, to increase the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades
 - extending the range of vocational courses available to meet pupils' needs
 - making good use of the new assessment systems to check progress, highlight underperformance and provide effective targeted support.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - extending the careers information, advice and guidance to include pupils across both key stages
 - making sure that all leaders, including leaders of the core subjects and special educational needs, are held properly accountable for pupils' outcomes in their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that the new systems for recording pupils' performance give an accurate picture of pupils' progress over time
 - securing sustained improvement in attendance, especially for disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, a legacy of weak teaching and recruitment difficulties has prevented some pupils from achieving well enough. In addition, leaders' actions to hold staff to account for pupils' outcomes have not been robust enough.
- New lines of accountability, improved assessment systems and new ways of recording and tracking progress are now starting to make a difference to the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. It is still too soon to judge the full impact of the changes. Nevertheless, teachers' performance management is now focused more strongly on pupils' progress, including that of disadvantaged pupils.
- Predictions of pupils' performance in some subjects last year were overly generous and did not give leaders an accurate picture of where pupils were falling behind, and limited the effectiveness of interventions and support. Assessment procedures have improved and teachers are becoming more accurate in their evaluations of pupils' progress but significant discrepancies still exist between subjects.
- New systems for recording information about pupils' performance are checked by senior staff to make sure that records give an accurate picture of pupils' progress over time. Pupils at risk of underachieving are now identified effectively.
- The use of additional funding did not support last year's disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 well enough. Leaders now regularly review the support these pupils receive on an individual basis, and adapt interventions if required. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making much better progress and are now catching up in some subjects.
- For those pupils in Year 7 who arrive at the school behind in their communication and numeracy skills, the school has provided appropriate targeted support and they are progressing well.
- Senior leaders' views of the strengths and weaknesses of the school are now broadly accurate.
- Previously, the support provided by the trust has not made enough difference to the achievement or welfare of pupils. The recent additional capacity the trust provides now gives the support needed to focus on securing improved outcomes for pupils.
- The trust has been effective in addressing the significant recruitment problems in numerous subject areas. Some pupils have had up to 15 different teachers in the core subjects over their five years at the school. The school is now fully staffed in all subjects. There are new subject leaders in English and mathematics, 17 new staff, and a comprehensive restructuring of the pastoral staff and systems.
- Proven leaders from the trust's partner school are working alongside subject leaders in a range of subjects to share good practice and promote improvement. This is adding momentum to the school's drive for improvement.
- The curriculum has been changed so that pupils now receive better guidance to follow pathways more suitable to their aspirations and abilities. However, pupils with low literacy skills, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are not yet provided with a curriculum that will allow them to achieve higher standards in the

future. Leaders' plans sensibly include extending the range of vocational courses.

- Leaders have introduced regular training for teachers to meet the priorities in the school improvement plan. Staff access trust-wide support through coaching and mentoring programmes, attending trust training days and working with lead practitioners. As a result, teaching is improving.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed well. For example, the 'pause for thought' programme makes pupils reflect on their own experiences, while also considering other people's situations. The 'every child matters' and 'beliefs and ethics' lessons, tutor time and assemblies help pupils develop a clear understanding of British values.
- The strong relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to learn about, and model, mutual respect. The core values programme, alongside some inspirational quotes from the prominent display work, reinforces the importance of tolerance and democracy.

Governance of the school

- By their own admission, governors have not always monitored standards closely enough, or challenged leaders sufficiently. Governors have had insufficient information to ensure that the school uses the pupil premium funding effectively. This is because the school's tracking processes and analysis of interventions has not been precise enough.
- Current processes are far more rigorous, and governors are now able to use information that leaders present to ask pertinent and taxing questions. They are fully aware of, and understand, the work needed to improve the school.
- Specific governors now oversee key areas of the school's performance. Link governors now monitor effectively each aspect of the school's work. Governors monitor standards more effectively and hold leaders to account by asking them to 'prove' it or 'show me'.
- Governors access training from the school, trust and local authority to ensure that their understanding of performance measures and current guidance is up to date. The local governing body has an effective working relationship with the trust.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors monitor that all required checks are carried out to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children, and make good use of the training received to do this job well.
- Safeguarding arrangements have been reviewed and updated appropriately by a senior leader to check that the school's procedures are suitably robust and that they are effective in protecting children from harm.
- A team of designated leaders ensures that records of safeguarding incidents and disclosures are maintained. They acknowledge that some of these records need better oversight to check that the support put in place to protect pupils remains effective.

- Pupils say they feel safe and are shown how to keep safe, including when using social media. They are taught about the risks attached to extremism and radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough across all subjects. This is evident in the presentation of pupils' work, its quality and the quantity of work expected from pupils in some subjects. Some teachers highlight incomplete work, as required by the school's policy, but then fail to follow this up in subsequent lessons.
- Some teachers spend too much time reinforcing material that pupils already know. Pupils told inspectors that some work is too easy and inspectors agree that this means that pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers in some subjects do not develop pupils' literacy skills sufficiently. Not all teachers correct pupils' work in line with the guidance provided. Pupils then find it difficult to understand work and some become distracted, leading to low-level disruption. Similarly, teachers do not check regularly enough whether pupils understand what to do or if they are working hard enough.
- The teaching for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not consistently effective; for example, teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils; relationships between teachers and pupils are productive, without being oppressive; and teachers probe pupils' understanding and push pupils to achieve more. This was seen in a Year 10 English lesson, where pupils were guided very clearly on how to develop paragraph structures.
- Some teachers use feedback well to help pupils improve their work. For example, pupils' folders in media show that the assessment of pupils' progress was incisive and helpful in encouraging pupils to enhance the quality of their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The persistent absence rates of some groups, especially disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, have been too high. Consequently, the pupils have achieved lower outcomes than their peers. Although all staff now challenge parents and pupils more effectively about poor attendance, senior leaders agree that more robust monitoring is still needed in some longstanding, difficult cases.
- Current records show that attendance is improving and approaching the national average. This reflects the work that leaders have done to reinforce the importance of attendance. The clear message to pupils that 'days off cost good grades' highlights the impact of poor attendance on progress. Pupils are now very aware of the need to

attend school every day.

- Ten pupils from Year 11 were educated off-site at Prospect House last year. This provision helps pupils to re-engage in learning. While the school monitors the progress of the pupils, the lack of any baseline assessment makes it difficult for leaders to show the full picture of progress over time. This year, all of these pupils successfully progressed into further education, training or employment.
- Pupils access a range of information about social inequality, cultural diversity and humanity. Pupils understand what it is to be a good citizen. They put their learning into practice through their fundraising activities, such as for Children in Need and the school's Christmas Box appeal. Year 11 pupils planned and delivered their own assembly, so that others could develop a greater awareness about people with mental health issues.
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities and trips, including some to Borneo and Tanzania, help to increase pupils' cultural development.
- The school works hard to ensure that pupils feel looked after and cared for. Pupils say that: 'The school works hard to make sure everyone is okay. We talk about differences and accept them. We treat others with respect and care.'
- Leaders ensure that pupils receive impartial careers advice in Year 11 and the programme has been developed so that pupils now receive more individualised support to help them make informed choices when they leave. This includes a greater awareness of the academic, vocational and apprenticeship routes. The newly established team has plans in place to improve provision further by rolling out the programme to include both key stages, but the provision for current pupils in Years 7 to 10 is not strong enough.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Poor behaviour is not challenged consistently well. In a few classes, pupils do not follow instructions and talk while the teacher gives out information. Pupils are clear that behaviour in lessons has improved, however, and they say that most pupils now behave appropriately in their lessons.
- Pupils stated that there are still some inconsistencies in behaviour between subjects, more noticeably when their regular teacher is not there, but these inconsistencies are decreasing. Pupils said that a small minority of pupils continue to cause some disruption, but most staff deal with this well.
- The headteacher and the trust have prioritised improving pupils' behaviour. This has worked well. Pupils are polite, welcoming and friendly. They readily engage in conversation while queueing quietly and patiently at lunchtime. Most pupils, staff and parents acknowledge the positive changes in behaviour that have taken place over the last 18 months.
- Pupils move around the site in a calm and orderly way. They open doors for visitors, and most move swiftly between lessons and are punctual. The number of referrals for poor behaviour to the school's exclusion room is falling, but remains too high.
- Pupils are proud to be part of the school. Pupils enjoy the competitive elements and

sense of community that the heads of house and key stage leaders have created.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- On entry to the school, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well below the national average. In 2016, pupils did not make consistently good progress by the end of key stage 4. Year 11 pupils made significantly less progress in a range of subjects than other pupils did nationally. However, a far greater proportion of current pupils at both key stages are now making the progress of which they are capable.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able, is not consistently good. While outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving for current pupils, leaders' use of the additional funding has not helped pupils from previous years to achieve the grades of which they are capable. The monitoring of the pupils' progress is now being more effectively coordinated. Early indications suggest that this closer monitoring, alongside leaders' more effective evaluation of the impact of the support these pupils receive, is having a positive impact. Current pupils' performance shows that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress in English, mathematics and science across most year groups.
- Pupils' attainment across a broad range of subjects is low, but improving. In 2015/16, 45% of Year 11 pupils attained at least a C grade in English and mathematics, 17% lower than the national average. A legacy of poor teaching and staffing difficulties has been the root cause for the underachievement. However, current assessment information shows significant improvement in pupils' attainment in all year groups.
- The school's performance information for pupils currently in Year 11 shows improving trends for all groups. Leaders' tracking of pupils' attendance at the intensive support sessions provided for Year 11 pupils during 'period 6' is making a difference. Pupils said that the support improves their understanding, helps them to learn more effectively and boosts their confidence.
- Leaders use the additional catch-up funding effectively. Pupils receive good one-to-one support, and use a range of literacy and numeracy programmes. There have been some significant improvements in how well pupils read. The improvements in pupils' numeracy skills are less strong, but leaders have acted decisively. They have reviewed the provision and made new arrangements to provide better support.
- The school has worked hard to build pupils' enjoyment and ability in reading. A well-stocked and well-used library offers a friendly environment for pupils in which to relax and read. Tutor-group time gives pupils the opportunity for silent reading, and pupils make good use of the book boxes, completing reviews on the bookmarks provided. Displays such as 'the reading game' highlight the enjoyment reading can give, and recommended texts, such as the Carnegie Greenaway Books 2016, encourage pupils to challenge themselves.

School details

Unique reference number	137187
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10021791

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	548
Appropriate authority	The academy trust
Chair	Karl Wainwright
Headteacher	Tracy Brogan
Telephone number	01480 374748
Website	www.ernulf.cambs.sch.uk
Email address	office@ernulf.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 December 2014

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.
- The school converted to become an academy in August 2011. It is part of the St Neots Learning Partnership Trust (SNLP) with Longsands Academy.
- A small proportion of pupils attend alternative provision at Prospect House. The trust runs this off-site provision, with pupils also attending from Longsands Academy. The provision is mainly for pupils who are excluded or are at risk of exclusion.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an

education, health and care plan is above the national average.

- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The sixth form has been closed temporarily and pupils attend the partner school sixth form at St Neots Sixth Form Centre.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work both in and out of lessons. Inspectors observed learning in 20 lessons. They carried out a work scrutiny to assess pupils' progress over time. They undertook a learning walk to observe the quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, the chief executive officer of the trust, recently qualified teachers, three members of the governing body and two groups of pupils.
- Inspectors looked at the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures, and risk assessments.
- Documents scrutinised included self-evaluation and improvement planning, minutes of governors' and trust meetings, and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Although the school's age range for pupils is shown as 11 to 18, the school has temporarily closed its sixth form. Post-16 education has not been provided at the school in the last two academic years. Pupils now attend the partner school sixth form at St Neots Sixth Form Centre. As such, this report does not feature a section on the 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Inspectors considered the 34 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 28 free-texts sent by parents and carers, 23 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils, and 25 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Mitcheson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andy Hemmings	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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Manchester
M1 2WD

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