

Downham Market Academy

Bexwell Road, Downham Market, Norfolk PE38 9LL

Inspection dates

26–27 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have failed to take the necessary action to improve the school.
- Governors have failed to hold leaders to account for poor outcomes. They have accepted inaccurate information from leaders too readily.
- Until very recently, the school has received little effective support from the trust.
- Disadvantaged pupils make inadequate progress and this is not improving.
- The progress pupils make in a number of key subject areas, including English, science, humanities and mathematics, is inadequate.
- Governors do not monitor the use or impact of additional funding provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those eligible for pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funds.
- Attendance remains low. A high proportion of pupils do not attend school often enough. This shows no sign of improvement.
- Staff do not use the behaviour policy consistently. A significant minority of pupils behave inappropriately in lessons and disrupt the learning of others.
- Until recently, leaders did not review the impact of support provided to teachers to improve their skills and ensure that there is enough good teaching in the school. Consequently, many pupils experience far too much poor teaching, especially at key stage 3.
- Too often teachers have low expectations of pupils. They do not use assessment information to meet the needs of pupils or use questioning well enough to check understanding.
- Improvement plans do not sufficiently address the issues to improve provision at key stage 3.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of many pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The sixth form is a beacon for the school. Students learn well due to good teaching and so make good progress.
- Pupils feel safe, and pastoral care provided by heads of house is a strength of the school.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- As a priority, ensure that the new academy trust provides effective strategic leadership and efficient management arrangements for the school, so that foundations are laid for rapid and sustained improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that assessment information is well understood by teachers and pupils so that it can be used to plan effective lessons and accelerate progress
 - making sure that teachers have sufficiently high expectations, so that pupils are challenged to achieve their full potential, including the most able
 - ensuring that adults use effective questioning to check how far pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills have progressed.
- Improve the leadership and governance of the school and establish clear lines of accountability by:
 - setting performance management targets for staff that are sufficiently challenging and measurable and focus on improving outcomes for pupils
 - ensuring that leaders support staff whose skills need to develop, with high-quality training and clear evaluation
 - rapidly improving and embedding a system of self-evaluation which leaders and governors can use to review and challenge performance in all key stages and subjects across the school
 - reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it provides opportunities for all pupils to take courses which are appropriate to their needs and which fully support the next stage in their education, employment or training.
- Raise achievement of all pupils across key stages 3 and 4 and particularly for disadvantaged pupils by:
 - closely monitoring the use of funding allocated to the school for pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to ensure that it is used appropriately and improves outcomes
 - monitoring systematically the progress of pupils so that underachievement at all key stages is identified and necessary interventions are put in place to secure better outcomes.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - taking decisive action to improve attendance overall, with a sharp focus on groups

who do not attend school regularly enough

- ensuring that pupils fully understand the school's behaviour policy and that staff apply it consistently.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to ascertain how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Senior leaders, governors and trustees have failed to make necessary improvements to the school since it first joined the academy trust.
- Ineffective leadership has been tolerated for too long. Leaders are not held to account for the impact of their work through an appropriately challenging process of performance management. The interim principal has now set new targets that are more appropriate. Governors acknowledge that the performance management process is not fit for purpose and has little impact on decisions about pay or on teachers' performance.
- Leaders have had considerable difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers, particularly in science; this has contributed to a pattern of weak outcomes in this subject since the last inspection.
- The assessment system in place for key stage 3 is not understood well by pupils and staff. Consequently, it does not accelerate pupils' progress. At key stage 4, pupils said that they 'pay no attention' to targets as these are not helpful.
- The newly appointed interim principal has taken vital action to improve the outcomes of Year 11. The implementation of an improvement plan, which identifies urgent interventions supported through funds released by the trust, has had an impact. In January, outcomes were estimated to be even lower than the inadequate standards in 2016. Actions taken have now improved the likely achievement of Year 11, although standards remain very low.
- The trust appointed a new chief executive officer in February. A small group of governors, from both the local governing body and the trust, monitors the impact of actions identified in the improvement plan. However, this has happened too late to improve outcomes sufficiently for this year.
- School leaders and governors do not have a strategic plan for the use of additional funding for pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up and special educational needs. The significantly large amounts of additional funds are not set aside for the relevant groups but used as one single fund to support all school improvement. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils remain extremely poor. There is no evidence that leaders have a clear rationale for spending the additional money or measure the impact on the progress made by eligible pupils.
- Middle leaders say they have a sense that things are improving. However, some have an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching in their departments.
- Newly qualified teachers feel well supported. The school offers a number of training opportunities, but these have yet to have sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make.
- The use of early entry in a number of GCSE subjects, for pupils at the end of Year 10, contributed to much lower than national attainment in science, geography and history last year. These pupils commented that they did not have sufficient curriculum time to prepare properly. All most-able pupils took vocational qualifications last year and will

again this year. This does not offer appropriate challenge for a number of pupils. The interim principal has started to address this issue, but the previous curriculum continues to have a negative impact on outcomes for this academic year.

- The curriculum offers a broad range of subject choices, including vocational options and a number of extra-curricular opportunities including drama productions, music concerts, film clubs and other activities, some of which contribute towards a national award. The pupils spoke enthusiastically about the wide range of sports teams they could join, including swimming, netball and football, which they enjoy.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted through a number of activities such as 'the girls' form' to help support confidence of girls, and pupils visiting a Royal Air Force base to grow confidence and teamwork. Pupils are involved in Remembrance Day commemorations and a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education delivered through mostly well-planned tutor periods organised by heads of house. However, the regular absence of a large number of pupils means that they cannot take full advantage of tutor periods or other extra-curricular opportunities provided by school.
- Pupils are well prepared for their futures in their understanding of equality, tolerance and fairness, but are unclear about some aspects of life in modern Britain, for example the principles of democracy.
- It is recommended that newly qualified teachers are not appointed to the school.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is inadequate. Governors have not held school leaders to account. They accepted too readily inaccurate assessment information from school leaders and this has allowed the decline in standards to continue without challenge.
- Due to a number of recent resignations, the local governing body is now comprised of a small group of committed governors who want to support the school. However, they are unclear about a number of aspects of school performance including the systems in place to ensure effective performance management, current standards of teaching and current assessment information.
- The written scheme of delegation lacks clarity about where responsibility lies. The local governing body and the trust are now working together to monitor performance in the school. This has come too late to avoid poor outcomes or improve attendance this academic year.
- Governors have not monitored the use and impact of additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs, Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safer recruitment procedures are compliant. Appropriate checks are made about the suitability of staff to work with children. There is some confusion about the administration of this paperwork between the trust and the school. More clarity would

ensure greater security of this process.

- Staff receive information about how to recognise signs of abuse and 'Prevent' duty training has taken place. They know who to go to with concerns and a staff code of conduct and whistleblowing policy are in place.
- Referrals for children at risk are quickly processed and passed to the appropriate authority. Records are kept appropriately and are timely, secure and very thorough.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and understand the need for all aspects of on-line safety, including sexting and peer-on-peer abuse. They know which adults they can approach in school if they have concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Pupils do not make the progress they should because of weak teaching in key subjects.
- Teachers do not use questioning with sufficient skill to be sure that pupils have made gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. This slows progress.
- Teaching is not well planned and does not allow all pupils to access the tasks set and make progress. For some pupils, the work is far too easy or lacks the challenge needed to accelerate progress.
- The teaching of literacy is generally weak. Standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar in too many pupils' books in key stage 3 show little improvement and in some the standard declines. Where teaching is stronger, teachers implement the school's literacy policy, for example, in the use of key words.
- A number of pupils' books show gaps in learning, sometimes due to absence, and it is unclear what support they receive to help them catch up.
- When teachers do not set well-defined tasks which interest and challenge pupils, behaviour in the classroom deteriorates and this disrupts learning.
- Too few pupils take advantage of opportunities to improve their work and so do not learn from their mistakes.
- There is some stronger teaching in the school, often at key stage 4 and especially in the sixth form. In art and physical education, teachers use their knowledge to plan purposeful activities that pupils respond to positively, making improvements in their learning. In English, a number of pupils in Year 11 recognise that due to recent improvements in the quality of teaching, their understanding of the demands of the GCSE examination has improved.
- Attendance by parents at meetings to talk about pupil progress has grown and the weekly newsletter seeks to keep parents informed about events, issues and developments at the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Pupils do not demonstrate resilience when faced with work that they cannot do. They lose focus easily and do not make enough progress.
- Careers advice provided through the curriculum has not had its intended impact. Key stage 4 pupils said that there is no systematic support to help them make choices for the next stage of their lives. One pupil said, 'you have to ask if you need help'. Consequently, they are unclear as to the range of opportunities that exist for their next steps, including those provided by the school's sixth form, which few plan to join next year.
- The number of bullying or racist incidents recorded is low. The use of homophobic or racist language is not tolerated by staff or by pupils.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and when it does happen teachers deal with it effectively. Pupils said that if they had a problem they know who to approach to help them.
- Effective systems are in place to monitor the attendance and progress of pupils who attend alternative provision.
- Heads of house have established effective lines of communication with parents to ensure that parents are informed about issues regarding the welfare of pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. Too often, pupils' inappropriate and occasionally confrontational behaviour wastes valuable learning time. This is particularly evident at key stage 3.
- Teachers do not enforce the school behaviour policy consistently, and poor behaviour is not dealt with effectively. Some teachers do not have high expectations of how pupils should behave and ignore disruptive behaviour.
- Attendance is low and not improving. There are high numbers of pupils who do not attend school regularly and miss opportunities to learn and make progress.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is significantly lower than average and is not improving.
- The school has introduced a new behaviour policy. Rates of exclusions recorded have reduced this academic year, but remain too high especially for disadvantaged pupils.
- The majority of pupils look smart in their uniforms and pupils' behaviour around the school is usually courteous and respectful both to each other and to adults.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils do not make the progress that they should from their starting points. This has been the case for the last three years.
- In 2016, GCSE results showed no signs of improvement. Pupils made progress that was well below the national average across most key subject areas, including English, mathematics and science. Current standards this year indicate that this low level of

performance will be repeated.

- Disadvantaged pupils make significantly less progress than their peers, and this situation is not improving. The use of pupil premium funding is ineffective because it is not used to improve the progress of the pupils it is meant for.
- The use of the Year 7 catch-up funding, those funds allocated for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is not monitored by leaders and governors. However, a number of Year 7 pupils have benefited from a reading programme and the small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to make progress in line with their peers.
- There is no effective strategy for improving the performance of the most able, so they too underperform and do not attain the highest grades or make the same progress as their peers.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The leadership of the sixth form is very effective, which is why the provision and outcomes are so different to the rest of the school.
- High-quality sixth-form teaching ensures that students achieve well. Students make progress that matches and sometimes exceeds national averages. In 2016, the progress in a broad range of vocational subjects was also in line with others nationally.
- Students say that their targets are ambitious but realistic. They are well monitored and supported if they start to fall behind.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and this supports students in a number of subjects to make very good progress. Students work well together to deepen their understanding and engage wholeheartedly with their learning. They respond with confidence to questions and these responses generate interesting discussions.
- Students speak highly of the leadership of the sixth form and feel very well supported.
- Students say they receive excellent careers advice, including visits from external speakers and helpful advice when making university applications. In 2016, almost all students secured destinations that supported their chosen career pathways. This includes apprenticeship routes and university courses.
- Students spoke about a great range of extra-curricular activities on offer, including concerts, drama productions and leadership opportunities.
- Those who need to retake mathematics and English GCSE have a well-planned and resourced curriculum offer. Last year, results in these examinations showed progress that was at least in line with national averages.
- Work experience is a key part of the programmes of study and monitored by leaders. An example is the crèche run for two hours a week by the students taking a vocational course in health and social care.
- Numbers attending the sixth form are reducing over time as internal applications from the school are falling but the number of students joining from other providers remains constant. A high proportion of students who join the sixth form stay on to complete their courses.

- There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the building and students enjoy their sixth-form experience; they like the separate campus and the greater independence they are offered.

School details

Unique reference number	139204
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10031393

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,369
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	175
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Richard Bradley
Principal	Philip Hearne
Telephone number	01366 389100
Website	www.downhammarketacademy.co.uk
Email address	principal@downhammarketacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 March 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the curriculum, performance in 2016 and the impact of the use of funding for disadvantaged pupils and funding for Year 7 catch-up.
- The school is a larger-than-average secondary school with 16 to 19 provision.
- It became a member of the College of West Anglia Academy Trust (CWA Trust), a multi-academy trust in July 2013. The previous principal left recently and an interim principal has been in post since this time. The CWA Trust will withdraw from its role of sponsor once another sponsor is agreed with the regional schools commissioner.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and are therefore supported by the

pupil premium is slightly lower than average.

- Following the issue of a pre-termination warning notice letter from the regional schools commissioner, the trust has decided to withdraw from sponsoring the school as soon as a new sponsor is agreed.
- The majority of pupils in the school are White British. The proportions of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups are below national averages.
- The proportions of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are below average. The numbers of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs, and/or an education, health and care plan are higher than the national average.
- A few pupils attend vocational courses at the College of West Anglia, the Attleburgh Specialist Resource Base, Dance East Centre and work experience arranged through the 'World of Work'.
- The school met the current government floor standards in 2016, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The sixth form is located on a separate site to the rest of the school. There is very little interaction between the pupils at the school and the students in the sixth form.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across subjects and year groups in 50 lessons, or parts of lessons, and listened to four pupils read. A small number of observations were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and looked at their work. They met with pupils formally and spoke informally to them at break and lunchtime. The behaviour and conduct of pupils was observed throughout the school day.
- The inspection team considered a range of documents including the school action plan; policies; senior leaders' evaluations of the schools' performance relating to current standards; pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance; and safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with the interim principal, senior and middle leaders, teachers and governors, including the chair of governors and representatives from the trust.
- In addition, inspectors took account of 10 responses to Parent View and eight written responses from parents.
- There were no responses to the staff questionnaire.
- There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Kay Leach, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Pemberton	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Loughran	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Bell	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Hood	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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