

# The Pinetree School

Staniforth Road, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3LH

## Inspection dates

6–7 July 2017

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	8–9 July 2015

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching remains inconsistent. This is due to instability caused by changes in staffing and, until recently, the lack of clear plans to improve teaching.
- New procedures to use assessment information to plan pupils' learning are at an early stage of development.
- Pupils make better progress in mathematics than they do in English. The quality of teaching and leadership in English is underdeveloped.
- Not all pupils write at length, or often enough, in English and in other subjects.
- Teachers' marking is not correcting common errors, particularly in pupils' spelling.
- Expectations of how pupils present their work and complete tasks are too low.
- Attendance is rising but remains well below average. Some disadvantaged pupils are persistently absent from school.
- Improvement plans do not include clear targets to improve teaching or raise overall achievement.
- The school's small size means that not all subjects have leaders to promote improvement.
- Arrangements for governance are undergoing change and currently lack clarity.

### The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders are demonstrating the capacity to secure improvements. They have made significant gains in resolving most of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly. The school is calm and purposeful. Pupils say that they feel safe and enjoy school.
- Revised assessment and monitoring procedures provide staff with a detailed overview of pupils' needs and interests.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of projects and off-site visits.
- Safeguarding arrangements are securely in place.

## Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Gain greater consistency to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
  - using the information provided by leaders about the backgrounds, needs and interests of each pupil to plan suitable learning for them
  - checking systematically the impact this has on pupils' learning and progress
  - ensuring that teachers' marking helps pupils to improve their spelling
  - raising expectations of pupils' presentation skills and completion of all tasks.
  
- Raise achievement throughout the school, by:
  - improving the teaching and leadership of English
  - planning regular opportunities for pupils to write at length in English, and in a wide range of subjects
  - strengthening procedures to reduce persistent absence so that all pupils, particularly those known to be disadvantaged, attend more regularly.
  
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
  - ensuring that the new strategies introduced this year to improve provision become firmly established
  - providing further training and support for staff responsible for leading subjects
  - adding clear, measurable targets to the school improvement plan to enable staff to demonstrate the impact they are having on improving the school
  - ensuring that new arrangements for the school's governance are implemented promptly to enable governors to hold senior leaders fully accountable for securing further improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since the last monitoring inspection, the previous substantive headteacher has left the school. This, and other staffing changes, has led to some instability and slowed the school's journey out of special measures.
- Until recently, leaders have not provided staff with enough information and guidance to help them plan learning that meets the different needs of learners. This has led to significant inconsistencies in teaching and has limited the progress made by pupils.
- The current associate headteacher is demonstrating that she can improve the school. She will become the substantive headteacher next term. Aply supported by her deputy, she has initiated a range of improvements to monitor and improve provision and establish systematic procedures to raise achievement.
- The headteacher has sought the views of pupils and met with their parents to agree individual learning plans for all pupils. This is providing solid foundations for further improvement. Expectations of pupils' behaviour are higher. The school is calm, pupils remain in lessons and show respect towards one another and to staff.
- Leaders' monitoring and evaluation provides them with a clear overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and the impact of their actions to improve it. Self-evaluation is largely accurate. Improvement plans for the forthcoming year have been formulated but some of the priorities do not have clear, measurable targets to hold staff accountable for making improvements.
- An extended team of senior leaders with responsibility for teaching and learning, assessment and provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been established to add further capacity to improve the school. Additional training has been provided to support these middle leaders but this is new and needs more time to make a significant difference. Temporary arrangements are in place to lead and manage English, including literacy, until a new subject leader joins the school next term.
- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, mostly social, emotional and behavioural needs. Approximately half of all pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. The low number of these pupils prevents leaders from making meaningful comparisons with others in the school, or pupils nationally. Instead, leaders monitor the progress and welfare of each individual pupil. Additional resources are shared to enable all pupils to benefit. For example, a breakfast club funded by the pupil premium is open to all pupils each morning. Funding also ensures that all pupils experience off-site visits and enrichment opportunities. The pupil premium is also used effectively to provide tailored support. For example, one disadvantaged pupil is provided with a laptop and specialist software to aid her learning of literacy. Other disadvantaged pupils receive regular one-to-one support in reading and in numeracy outside of lessons. Pupils told inspectors that they feel this helps them to improve their reading.
- The curriculum is tailored to meet pupils' different starting points. All of them study core subjects each morning. In the afternoons, the curriculum is complemented by a broad range of practical-based learning in art, food technology computing and physical

education (PE). Tutorials and assemblies promote the school's values and teach pupils the importance of living in a diverse, tolerant society. A wide range of projects and off-site visits adds to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, and their enjoyment of school.

- Leaders have tightened procedures for monitoring alternative arrangements made for a small minority of pupils. Leaders meet with pupils and their parents on site at each alternative provision placement to ensure that parents are satisfied with the arrangements. Providers are expected to share important documentation with leaders to ensure that all health and safety procedures, including safeguarding, are in place.
- A weekly newsletter and a termly 'Pinetree Matters' magazine help to forge good links with parents and carers, and keep them informed of their child's education.

### **Governance of the school**

- The chair of the school's interim executive board (IEB) has left the school. The trust's chief executive currently leads the IEB on a temporary basis, until this matter can be resolved. Plans are under way to replace the IEB with a local governing body led by a new chair by the start of the next term.
- Trust leaders are holding newly appointed leaders fully accountable for making improvements. They and other leaders are asked to share their views at regular IEB meetings to keep the trust informed of the school's improvement.
- The trust ensures that all statutory duties relating to safeguarding are met.
- Some statutory documents are not available on the school's website. Trust leaders feel this is not necessary as they are already on the trust's own website. However, links to these documents are not made clear enough, particularly for parents seeking to access them.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The trust ensures that the single central record is checked regularly.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are up to date. Staff and parents know what to do if they have concerns about a child's welfare or safety.
- Child protection arrangements are robust. Detailed records of incidents and concerns are maintained. Links with other local agencies charged with protecting children are firmly established.
- Staff training, including training on the 'Prevent' duty to spot the dangers of radicalisation and extremism are up to date.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Requires improvement**

- Staffing changes have adversely affected the efforts of leaders to make the quality of teaching good. Some recent appointments are inexperienced or are not fully qualified. Further changes are expected next term as a new English teacher joins the school.

- Inspectors found clear signs of improvement, but also noted some key weaknesses. In too many lessons, staff use basic worksheets that do not provide pupils with sufficient challenge. One-word answers or simple statements do not challenge pupils to provide full answers, or to write at length. In English lessons and in other subjects, pupils are not asked to complete extended pieces of writing to develop their handwriting and composition skills.
- Reading is promoted effectively through regular opportunities to read with adults, read aloud in tutor time and have one-to-one tuition in reading. Pupils who met with inspectors said they felt much more confident in reading and shared good examples of how their reading has improved quickly since their arrival in school.
- Low expectations of pupils are evident in pupils' books. The school's agreed rules for presenting work, such as writing in pen and using a ruler to underline, are not followed. Work that is left unfinished is not challenged by teachers in their marking. Staff do not give pupils time to revisit their work to finish it, or to correct basic spelling errors.
- Senior leaders have introduced an 'inclusion register' that provides staff with a detailed overview of pupils' different needs and interests, their prior learning and the approaches that help them to learn effectively. This informs personal learning plans for each pupil. However, not all teachers use this information to plan learning suited to pupils' individual needs. Consequently, some tasks are too easy for the most able and too difficult for less-able pupils.
- Newly introduced 'learning ladders' are ensuring that assessment procedures become more systematic. Staff record each small step made by pupils to illustrate progress since their arrival in the school. These procedures are new and not yet firmly established. Assessments aim to show pupils the next steps they need to take to improve, but not all staff do this well enough.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Not all pupils attend regularly. Leaders can point to good case studies of pupils who arrived in school having missed long periods of education in their previous school, who now attend regularly. However, leaders acknowledge there is more to do to tackle persistent absence. A small minority of pupils known to be disadvantaged and therefore eligible for the pupil premium do not attend regularly. This presents a significant barrier to raising their achievement.
- Good relationships, based on a thorough understanding of the background of each pupil, underpins much of the school's work. Staff use the school's daily 'meet and greet' to check whether pupils are ready to learn, and gauge whether they have the attention and resilience to apply themselves fully to the school day. They work tirelessly to motivate and encourage pupils to engage fully and retain their interest.
- Pupils told inspectors that school is a safe place to be. School records show that very

few incidents of bullying occur. When they do, issues are followed up immediately with pupils and their parents. Pupils feel they can approach any adult in school, who will help them to resolve any concerns they have.

- Effective arrangements are made for the small minority of pupils whose personal needs cannot be met in school, or if their behaviour prevents them from attending lessons on a full-time basis. One-to-one tuition taught at nearby community settings enables these pupils to re-engage in learning and, at a later stage, reintegrate them back into full-time learning. Online learning resources have recently been introduced for some pupils to learn at home. These procedures are being closely monitored to ensure that they are suitable and help pupils to learn effectively.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Inspectors noted that a small minority of pupils still struggle to apply themselves fully, and maintain their attention throughout lessons. When this happens they do not disrupt learning, but instead 'switch-off' and disengage.
- Challenging behaviour is managed sensitively and expertly. Staff know how to diffuse awkward situations. They quickly gain the confidence of pupils and show endless patience and understanding when dealing with those who display unacceptable behaviour.
- School records show that there are few incidents of unacceptable behaviour. This is because staff forge excellent relations with pupils. Pupils who met with inspectors said, 'Teachers really care about us; they want you to succeed.' Pastoral staff work with pupils and their parents to identify barriers to learning, and ensure that they feel secure in school and at home.
- Pupils behaved well throughout the inspection. Behaviour is managed systematically. Pupils have 'credit cards' with their own personal targets to improve their behaviour and attitudes. Credits are awarded each lesson and if pupils accrue enough of them, they receive a cash voucher. This system works well. Pupils understand and value the rewards and sanctions in place.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Observations by inspectors confirmed that currently, pupils' progress is wholly dependent on the quality of teaching, which varies too widely. Pupils make better progress in mathematics, art, food technology and PE because, generally, the quality of teaching is better in these subjects.
- The small number of pupils within the school limits any meaningful comparisons of the progress they make with other pupils nationally. Not all pupil premium funding for each pupil reaches the school, which restricts the impact leaders can have on raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- Assessment information shows that in each year group and in all subjects, approximately one third of pupils are currently making expected progress, another third are making more than expected progress, and one third do not make enough

progress. Leaders acknowledge that there is considerable scope for accelerating the progress of most pupils across the school.

- In some subjects, particularly those with established staff who pupils know well, effective teaching leads to good learning and progress. For example, in mathematics pupils are set different work to do, depending on what they already know, understand and can do. Clear explanations and extended periods of learning, with good one-to-one support, aids pupils' learning. In art, pupils' portfolios show a good range of work using a range of materials. In PE and food technology, good demonstrations and coaching enable pupils to develop new skills.
- Leaders ensure that pupils capable of studying for recognised qualifications do so. This year, all pupils in Year 11 were entered for entry level awards in English, mathematics, science and information technology. Four of these pupils also sat examinations in GCSE English and mathematics. Leaders expect over two thirds of pupils in Year 11 to attain at least two GCSE qualifications this year.
- Effective careers advice, including opportunities to attend careers fairs and events, and work placements ensure that pupils in Year 11 are suitably prepared for the next stage of their lives. Two pupils attending work placements have already attained vocational awards in construction, transport maintenance and hospitality. School records show that all pupils leaving this year have a confirmed placement at local colleges or other vocational providers.

## School details

Unique reference number	139665
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10034266

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Des Reynolds
Headteacher	Sandra Govender
Telephone number	01842 752756
Website	<a href="http://www.pinetreeschool.org.uk">www.pinetreeschool.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@pinetree.norfolk.sch.uk">office@pinetree.norfolk.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	8–9 July 2015

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website: the Trust does not publish the school's annual reports and accounts on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about its exclusion arrangements, charging and remissions policy, complaints policy or annual reports and accounts.
- The majority of pupils are White British. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Ten pupils have either a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.



- The government's floor targets (the minimum targets that schools are expected to achieve) in 2016 do not apply to this setting.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school was placed in special measures in July 2015. On the first day of the inspection, the lead inspector decided the school no longer requires special measures and converted it to a section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors visited five lessons with a senior leader, and carried out learning walks around the school with a senior leader to observe pupils at work, their behaviour and the quality of provision to support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, the chief executive of the Engage Trust, and a group of pupils. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a parent.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures, self-evaluation and improvement planning, minutes of IEB meetings, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, monitoring of teaching records and other information provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons.

## Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tania Perry

Ofsted Inspector

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