

Caister Academy

Windsor Road, Caister-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR30 5LS

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have changed the culture of the school. They have driven sustained and effective improvements across the school.
- Through consistently hard work, sharply identified training and effective support for staff, leaders have ensured that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Governors and the trust are committed and offer a robust level of challenge to the school. The work of the Creative Education Trust has been critical to the journey of improvement at the school.
- Leaders, governors and staff have worked hard to tackle pupils' historical underachievement. As a consequence, pupils' achievements have improved in most areas of the curriculum.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress by the end of key stage 4 in a range of subjects.
- Staff care for pupils well. Vulnerable pupils, such as children looked after, are particularly well supported to flourish and achieve.
- Pupils receive highly effective support to improve their reading and writing skills in many areas of the curriculum. As a result, many pupils are able to transfer skills learned in one subject to another.
- Teaching has improved and is now good. This is due to the high-quality support and monitoring conducted by leaders and the Creative Education Trust.
- Following a period of turbulence, leadership of special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has improved markedly. These pupils receive appropriate support and make good progress in many areas of the curriculum.
- The school curriculum is broad and balanced, offering pupils a range of academic and vocational subjects. Pupils receive very effective guidance about future careers.
- Although leadership of most subjects, particularly English, in the curriculum is strong, a minority of subjects, such as science and geography, are not led consistently well.
- The quality of guidance provided to pupils to accelerate their progress is inconsistent across the curriculum.
- Although most pupils display commendable attitudes towards learning, a few pupils' low-level disruptive behaviour is not addressed consistently well. As a result, these pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils.
- Attendance is improving but remains below the national average. Some pupils do not understand the link between attendance and achievement at school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of personal development, behaviour and well-being by:
 - improving attendance to be at least in line with the national average
 - continuing to ensure that all pupils clearly understand the link between exemplary behaviour, attendance and academic achievement.
- Make teaching, learning and assessment outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the leadership of all subjects is as consistently strong as the leadership of English
 - ensuring that pupils receive consistently effective guidance in every area of the curriculum to support accelerated progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- In collaboration with her vice-principal and assistant principal, the principal has led whole-school improvements well. The leadership team has made sustained improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum.
- Leaders have a clear and informed understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in all curriculum areas. Through regular monitoring, they are able to provide pertinent support where required. The information gained feeds clearly into the staff programme for continual professional development. Consequently, teaching is now typically good.
- The principal delegates senior leadership responsibilities effectively. The senior leadership team works collegially to support the improvements it has accurately identified in the school improvement plan. As a result, the improvements are sustained and effective.
- The Creative Education Trust has provided support to the school to raise standards. The trust challenges leaders to account for the progress that pupils make and provides pertinent support. Consequently, the trust knows the school well.
- Leaders use pupil achievement data well to identify where additional support is needed.
- Most middle leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths of their respective departments and the areas needing improvement. Senior leaders and the trust provide effective support in developing middle leadership through mentoring and access to subject cluster groups within the trust and external leadership programmes. For example, the English department leads the subject cluster group within the trust. The English lead has successfully implemented a highly effective departmental assessment system which supports pupils' progress well.
- Leaders have designed an effective and engaging curriculum for all pupils. Pupils have a range of opportunities to succeed in academic and vocational subjects. Leaders have focused on raising standards through improving the provision within the curriculum rather than adopting 'quick fixes'. For example, the majority of pupils have to study German to GCSE level to ensure that they develop the language skills to communicate with other cultures.
- Leaders make effective use of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils and regularly review the impact of the support that has been put in place. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils make good progress in most areas of the curriculum. Additionally, the Year 7 catch-up funding for literacy and numeracy is used very effectively. Pupils receive targeted support and make good progress. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoyed the additional support and expressed their appreciation of the ways in which staff have helped them to improve.
- Leaders provide pupils with a range of extra-curricular opportunities to develop their skills, such as dance clubs, the STEM club for girls (science, technology, engineering

and mathematics), drama productions and debating competitions.

- The school ensures that pupils develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally through a very comprehensive programme of assemblies and throughout the curriculum. For example, pupils explore the horrors of slavery in history and the problems that arise in totalitarian states through their study of George Orwell's novel 'Animal Farm' in English. Pupils also develop a keen understanding of different cultures, for example through African drumming in music and the study of Kandinsky in art.
- Pupils develop critical citizenship skills throughout the curriculum. Through debating, pupils practise expressing their opinions freely. Pupils apply for the school council, enabling leaders to select a representative body comprising pupils of differing ability levels. As a consequence, pupils are kind and courteous both to each other and to staff.
- Leaders ensure that pupils in Year 7 with low starting points are provided with additional support to boost their language and social skills and emotional resilience. Although this is a relatively new programme, designed in response to leaders' identification of pupils' needs, the inspectors observed the ways in which pupils made progress in their thinking and language development.
- Leadership of SEN and/or disabilities has improved markedly. Pupils currently receive appropriate support and are making good progress.
- The leadership of some subjects is not as robust as others, such as English. For example, a minority of subject leads in science and geography do not provide consistently effective support and guidance for the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment. As a consequence, pupils do not make as much progress in these subjects as they do in other areas of the curriculum.

Governance of the school

- Governance at Caister Academy is good. The trust has formed a rapid improvement board to take the place of the governing board until improvements have been embedded. A combination of the trust and governors works hard to support the school and to challenge where appropriate.
- The rapid improvement board is ambitious for the success of the school. Board members have a clear plan with identified strengths and areas for improvement. They visit the school regularly to gather critical information about different areas of the school to inform their understanding.
- Governors and the trust hold the school leadership to account through highly pertinent, challenging questions. As a result of clearly identified areas of weakness, attendance is a standing item on every rapid improvement board meeting.
- Governors and the trust ensure that pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is used appropriately and effectively to improve pupils' achievements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The single central record of checks on staff and adults meets statutory requirements

and is regularly reviewed by the safeguarding governor. Staff files are well maintained.

- Safeguarding leaders are alert to the needs of pupils who need help. They ensure that pupils receive appropriate support swiftly. They are tenacious in ensuring that pupils receive the help they require from external agencies. All referrals are assessed and recorded appropriately and vigilantly followed up.
- The designated teacher for children looked after is highly effective in providing both pastoral and academic support. As a result, pupils make good progress and enjoy school.
- All staff have been trained in safeguarding and this is regularly reviewed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers make expert use of their good subject knowledge to support pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers have high expectations and aspirations for pupils and this is reflected in the challenge provided in many lessons.
- Teachers in many subjects develop pupils' ability to reflect on their learning and to evaluate how they can improve. As a result, pupils in subjects such as English, history, art and drama are able to make progress as they can assess their misconceptions and plan appropriate next steps.
- Teachers in many subjects across the curriculum develop pupils' higher-level thinking skills such as evaluation and analysis. For example, inspectors observed pupils in art analysing the effect of peacock imagery in a Kandinsky painting, while pupils in history analysed sources regarding Nazi Germany, and pupils in English analysed characters and themes in 'Animal Farm'. As a result, pupils' critical thinking skills are reinforced across the curriculum.
- Teachers focus very clearly on developing pupils' language skills in many areas of the curriculum. The focus on subject-specific language is clearly outlined in lessons, books and wall displays. Teachers in many lessons also support pupils' written responses with prompt sentences and key language terms. As a result, pupils' written responses are strong in many subjects.
- Teachers' questioning skills are strong in most lessons. Pupils' understanding is carefully supported through well-structured questions. For example, inspectors observed sharp questioning in mathematics and food technology lessons. As a result, staff address pupils' misconceptions and develop pupils' thinking.
- Teachers in many subject areas plan lessons with careful consideration for the learning needs of their pupils. Teachers build on prior learning and extend pupils' understanding. For example, inspectors observed pupils preparing to write extensively in English by drawing on previous learning.
- Staff who are new to teaching are well supported. They receive good-quality mentoring and guidance. They also benefit from internal, local authority and trust training opportunities.
- Pupils have many opportunities to read for pleasure. The library is well stocked and an inviting place for pupils to come and read. All Year 7 and 8 pupils have timetabled reading lessons once a week, while other year groups are able to use the library

throughout the school day. Lower-ability readers participate in a reading programme designed to accelerate their reading progress in the library. Pupils' reading skills are assessed regularly and appropriate intervention is provided where necessary. As a result, pupils' reading levels have improved.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress in many areas of the curriculum and enjoy school. They receive appropriate support from staff to ensure that they can access the curriculum successfully. Pupils do not receive consistently effective guidance in every area of the curriculum to support them in making rapid progress. Consequently, pupils in some subjects do not understand how to make rapid improvements to their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and articulate. They know who to go to if they have a problem and are confident that staff will resolve issues quickly.
- School safeguarding leads are alert to changes in pupils' behaviour and act swiftly to support them. Pupils state clearly that they feel safe in school. Pupils are taught how to keep safe through lessons and assemblies. For example, pupils learn about how to keep safe when on the internet.
- Pupils develop a strong understanding of different faiths and cultures. For example, most pupils study German to GCSE level. The ethics programme offers pupils a range of opportunities to study other faiths and ways of living.
- Pupils demonstrate pride in their work through their books and work in class.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop their understanding of the world around them. For example, Year 10 girls enjoy many opportunities to broaden their view of women's roles in science and technology through the STEM club.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are punctual to class. Most pupils behave well in class. Pupils are attentive and focused. They support each other with their learning and demonstrate courtesy and respect.
- Pupils can define bullying accurately. Pupils learn about bullying and how to deal with it effectively. Pupils are confident that if bullying occurs, staff resolve it promptly and appropriately.
- Pupils' attendance has improved but is still below the national average.
- The school has introduced a new behaviour system which has not yet been fully embedded. A minority of pupils continue to create low-level disruption in class.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupil entries for the core academic subjects of English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history or geography are significantly above the national averages. This is testament to the strong leadership at the school, with leaders who are ambitious and aspirational for their pupils.
- Pupils' progress in English has remained consistently strong from 2016 to 2017. However, attainment is just below the national average. The challenge evident in the English curriculum, both at key stage 3 and key stage 4, is raising pupils' achievements. In addition, the sharp focus on language and literacy development in many subjects across the curriculum is strengthening pupils' reading and writing skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils made good progress in English and mathematics in 2016 and 2017. The focused use of pupil premium funding for additional English, mathematics and science support has had a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. Many pupils are now pursuing more academic pathways post-16 due to improved results.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics was not as strong as in English in 2016 and 2017. However, mathematics attainment was in line with the national average. Due to the strength of teaching observed by inspectors and pupils' work in books, pupils are currently making better progress.
- Due to the school's well-structured careers guidance, pupils are well informed about GCSE options and post-16 opportunities. Pupils told inspectors how they valued the time and support provided to help with college applications and Year 9 options. In 2017, all Year 11 pupils went on to further education or apprenticeships.

School details

Unique reference number	141331
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10041740

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	603
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Phillip Cantwell
Headteacher	Michelle Strong
Telephone number	01493 720542
Website	www.caisteracademy.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@caisteracademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Caister Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school converted to academy status in 2015 and is now part of the Creative Education Trust.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- Most pupils are of white British heritage, with small numbers of pupils from a range of different ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- In 2017, the school met the government's published floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons, many jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also made short visits to lessons and looked at pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils from various year groups. Discussions with school staff, including senior leaders, middle leaders and four governors, were held.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation, information on pupils' outcomes, and records relating to the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, and the behaviour and safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 46 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, alongside 41 free-text responses and 22 staff responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Gerard Batty	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Copping	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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