

Great Heath Academy

Girton Close, Mildenhall, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP28 7PT

Inspection dates

24–25 April 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
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

- Since joining the Academy Transformation Trust in 2015, the leaders of Great Heath Academy have ensured that the quality of education that pupils receive is good. This means that pupils' work is of a high standard.
- The school's well-planned and broad curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to acquire new knowledge and improve essential skills. This helps pupils across the whole school to make good progress.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. This enables teachers to draw on their high expectations and strong subject knowledge, and to intervene quickly to correct misconceptions and support pupils to produce good work.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from the school's purposeful learning environment, and are well supported by additional intervention when necessary. Because of this, they make similar good academic progress to other pupils.
- Teachers have wide opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities. As a result, they support and challenge each other to provide a breadth of high-quality learning experiences for pupils.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe when they are there. They understand how to express concerns, and appreciate staff's quick responses to these concerns. Pupils understand the school's clear routines and behaviour expectations, and they respond well to them.
- Teachers are ambitious for the school's most able pupils, but occasionally work is too easy for them, and sometimes feedback from teachers does not stretch them sufficiently.
- Senior leaders ensure that thorough and accurate assessment information is collected regularly for all pupils. Leaders do not, however, always ensure that this information is used effectively to intervene quickly for some pupils with gaps in their basic skills and understanding.
- The school has been well led through a period of rapid growth in pupil numbers. Newly appointed teachers are challenged and supported by leaders and governors, but they are not provided with sufficient opportunity to learn from the very strong practice of some other teachers in the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further by:
 - using the school's strong assessment systems more effectively to respond quickly and decisively when a pupil is identified as having any gaps in their understanding of essential basic skills
 - ensuring that teachers challenge the most able pupils to achieve even more highly
 - providing more opportunities for teachers to learn from the strong practice of their colleagues.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school became a member of the Academy Transformation Trust in 2015 and, since then, has been well supported by the trust to maintain and further develop its commitment to high standards for pupils. The school has appointed a number of new teachers to accommodate recent growth in pupil numbers, but leaders and governors have not allowed this to diminish their ethos of high expectations, and pupils have continued to do well.
- The principal has recently begun to support another local school in the trust. Because of this, Great Heath Academy has appointed a head of school to ensure that this does not affect its own improving standards. This means that the school's ambitious culture is being maintained, and pupils continue to achieve good outcomes.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching well. They make clear their expectations to all staff, and check that these expectations are being met. Where necessary, staff are supported to develop their knowledge and skills, although there are not always sufficient opportunities for staff to learn from the strong practice of some of their colleagues. Newly qualified teachers are mentored and supported well, and rapidly contribute to the school's good quality of education.
- Leaders are ambitious for the school's disadvantaged pupils, and use pupil premium funding well to ensure that they make good progress. The school has identified the barriers that its disadvantaged pupils face, and has created a learning environment that helps them to do well, where standards of teaching and behaviour are high. Where necessary, interventions are provided to help disadvantaged pupils keep up with their peers. As a result, there is no significant difference between the achievements of these pupils and other pupils in the school, and the progress that they make is similar to that of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that enables them to acquire a wide range of knowledge across a variety of topics, while developing useful skills. Examples include the development of scientific enquiry when analysing the content of different soil samples, or identifying Viking place names on a map of England. The curriculum ignites pupils' curiosity and enthusiasm, and the work that they produce, including regular pieces of extended writing, is of a high standard. The curriculum also supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with opportunities to develop their understanding of British values alongside learning about other nationalities and cultures.
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported by the SEN coordinator (SENCo). She knows these pupils well and makes sure that provision is in place to meet their specific needs, while ensuring that they are with their peers, benefiting from high-quality teaching in the classroom for as much time as possible. Their progress is closely monitored, and the school has high expectations that these pupils should make good progress from their different starting points. Parents of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities spoke highly of the support their children receive. As one such parent commented: 'The school has worked well with us and accommodated our child's additional needs.'

- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium is used effectively. Specialist sports coaches visit the school and model good practice to teachers. The funding is also used to provide coaching opportunities for school sports clubs in preparation for the many competitive sporting competitions that the school takes part in, such as football, cricket and athletics. The school has extensive playing fields that enable it to provide sports days for Great Heath pupils, and host sporting tournaments that include neighbouring schools.
- The school receives service pupil premium to reflect the relatively high number of pupils in the school with parents serving in the armed forces. This funding is used effectively to ensure that pastoral support is available if necessary, and to mitigate any negative educational impact on these pupils from attending several different schools in the course of their education.
- Inspectors' conversations with parents, and parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, showed that the majority of parents are very happy with the standard of education that their children receive. As well as commenting on their satisfaction with the progress that their children are making, parents expressed pleasure at how happy their children are at school. As one parent commented: 'My son loves to go to school and has fun while learning.'

Governance of the school

- The trustees of the Academy Transformation Trust have devolved a high level of autonomy to the school's local governing body. This local governing body works closely with the school's leaders, and its members have a high level of understanding about the school's strengths as well as the areas in which it needs to improve. Representatives of the local governing body visit the school regularly and draw on a variety of evidence about how well the school is managed, and the progress that pupils are making, in order to hold the school's leaders to account effectively.
- The trust provides regular challenge and support to the school's leaders. The trust prepares its own school improvement plan, and its representatives visit frequently to check on leaders' progress towards their improvement targets.
- The local governing body has appointed its own representatives to check how effectively the school spends its pupil premium and PE and sport premium, and to check that safeguarding procedures are applied thoroughly and that the welfare and safety of pupils are a priority. These representatives visit the school regularly and report their findings back to the local governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all necessary checks are carried out on any new staff or volunteers. The school's safeguarding lead makes sure that staff and volunteers receive regular safeguarding training updates. He also receives support from the trust to make sure that his own knowledge is up to date and thorough. This means that the school's staff and volunteers have a clear understanding of the procedures that they should follow to keep pupils safe at all times.

- The school works well with external agencies, regularly seeking support and advice where necessary.
- Pupils said that their school helps them to know how to keep safe, particularly when using the internet. They were able to recall what they had learned during their recent internet safety week, and explain how they could use what they had learned to protect themselves from harm.
- An overwhelming majority of parents who completed Parent View during the inspection agreed that their children feel safe and are well looked after at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Great Heath Academy has an ethos of high ambition and expectations for its pupils. Teachers use the school's imaginative and engaging curriculum to plan sequences of lessons that help pupils to make good progress over time. During those lessons, teachers and support staff vigilantly check that pupils have understood their work, and intervene quickly and effectively where necessary.
- Pupils are keen learners, and their behaviour in lessons reflects this. Only rarely will time be lost to low-level disruption, and teachers act decisively to deal with this if it happens. Where learning is strong, teachers use their effective subject knowledge to communicate concepts to pupils, setting them tasks that enable them to consolidate what they have learned.
- Teachers expect pupils to work hard in class, resulting in a wide range of high-quality work in pupils' exercise books and folders. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to write at length on subjects related to their learning in the wider curriculum. They are provided with high-quality texts and other prompts, and respond to these enthusiastically, for example when writing from the point of view of Lemuel Gulliver when reading 'Gulliver's Travels' in Year 6. As a consequence of this regular writing, and some insightful feedback from teachers, pupils make good progress in writing.
- There is an established culture of reading in the school. Pupils use their strong phonics skills to practise reading regularly so that they can enjoy reading the many books in their classrooms and school library. The wider curriculum gives pupils opportunities to read about what they are learning, and work in their books shows that pupils develop good comprehension skills throughout the school.
- The school's well-planned curriculum supports pupils to make good progress in science. Science teaching relates to topics in the rest of the curriculum, such as the water cycle as part of the 'What a wonderful world' unit of work in Year 5, and also encourages scientific investigation, such as the investigation of texture in the Year 1 'What's it made of?' unit of work.
- Occasionally, some learning is less effective, and tasks do not challenge pupils sufficiently. In these instances, teachers have not been given enough opportunity to observe the most effective practice around the school, and to learn from the strong example of some of their colleagues.
- The school has an accurate assessment system that is regularly updated for all pupils. This information is not, however, always used to identify when pupils need extra support to understand essential basic skills. This means that they are sometimes

pushed on to more difficult work before they are ready. This can apply, in particular, to the school's high proportion of pupils who arrive at different times throughout the year.

- Conscious of the fact that too few pupils have achieved the higher outcomes in recent end-of-key-stage tests, teachers are committed to stretching most-able pupils to achieve more highly. Their strategies have, however, not yet had sufficient impact, because the advice being given to the most able pupils is sometimes unclear, and sometimes insufficiently ambitious.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Attendance has been improving in recent years, and no group of pupils has an attendance record that is significantly worse than the average for the school.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about the school's recent adoption of an electronic system for reporting their welfare concerns. They say it is easy to use, and staff respond quickly to any worries that they raise. As a consequence, cases of bullying are rare and are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They are knowledgeable about online safety and are able to describe how the school helps them to be safe online, through events such as the 'Internet Safety Week'.
- The school council plays an important role in the life of the school. As well as helping pupils to understand the democratic process, it also makes significant decisions, such as choosing how pupils should be rewarded for good behaviour.
- Pupils' development is well supported by a rich programme of personal, social, health and economic education. This enables them to consider issues such as the similarities and differences between groups of people, or how to live a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are also enthusiastic about the enrichment activities that the school provides, on Friday afternoons, to help them to develop a broad range of skills and interests.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The wider school community works together to support good behaviour for pupils. Based on the school's 'Guide to behaviour' put together in consultation with the school council, pupils, parents and staff are clear about rewards and sanctions and, accordingly, pupils behave well.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They conduct themselves well, and wear their uniform with pride. They are enthusiastic learners, and cooperate well in lessons with staff and each other in order to take responsibility for their learning.
- Pupils interact well with each other. They regulate their own behaviour, and do not require excessive adult intervention to play together in the playground.
- The school records and monitors information about behaviour, and responds quickly

and decisively, when necessary, to ensure that high standards of behaviour are maintained.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress at Great Heath Academy. They get off to a good start in Nursery and Reception, and continue to do well throughout the school. As a consequence of the school's ambitious culture for its pupils, the proportions of pupils at the end of each key stage reaching the expected standard for their age compare well with national averages, and are improving.
- Because the teaching of phonics in the school is strong, pupils read well in key stage 1. This means that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is generally in line with the national average, and those pupils who do not reach the required standard in Year 1 are well supported to meet it in Year 2.
- While pupils do well in reading in key stage 1, standards in writing have been less good, particularly in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth. The school's accurate assessment systems have enabled them to identify this, and to act decisively to bring about improvements. As a consequence, the standard of writing in key stage 1 is now improving.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics in key stage 1 in 2017, and those reaching greater depth, was above the national average. Standards are continuing to rise this year.
- In 2017, the progress that pupils made in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2 was generally in line with that of pupils nationally. When the school has identified weaknesses, such as the progress made by pupils in reading in 2016, it has acted swiftly to deal with them. As a consequence, the amount of progress that key stage 2 pupils made in reading in 2017 improved significantly.
- With the support of the trust, the school has made a priority of improving the proportion of most-able pupils reaching the higher standards in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 and greater depth in writing. This work is paying off, and the proportions of pupils exceeding age-related expectations in these subjects throughout key stage 2 are now rising, although they are not yet high enough.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Taking into account their different starting points, the school tracks these pupils' progress closely to make sure that they do as well as other pupils in the school. If they begin to fall behind, leaders and teachers work hard to ensure that they begin to catch up quickly. This means that these pupils achieve outcomes similar to those of other pupils in the school with similar starting points.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress. The SENCo works closely with class teachers and, where necessary, with external agencies to ensure that pupils are challenged to do well across a broad curriculum from their different starting points. Pupils are assessed regularly and accurately to ensure that they make good progress, and a range of well-planned interventions are provided where necessary.

Early years provision

Good

- Children make good progress in the early years. They join the school with a wide variety of starting points, and are well prepared for Year 1 by the end of Reception.
- The early years are well led. Having taken on the role in September 2017, the new leader has been vigilant in ensuring that children are provided with activities that are challenging and fun, and that their work is accurately and regularly assessed.
- The Nursery and Reception classes are well organised, with a broad range of well-planned activities on offer to support children's development. Staff work closely with children to challenge and question them about what they are doing, and this helps them to consolidate their understanding of essential concepts.
- Children's creativity is developed well, and they enjoy the activities that are on offer. These activities are carefully planned to encourage children to develop their early reading, writing and mathematical skills. This means that applying these skills becomes a normal part of their learning routine.
- The school's strong culture of reading and writing is made secure in the early years. For example, phonics is taught well. Children listen attentively to staff, and are keen to apply what they have learned in their writing. They are proud of what they write, and work hard to produce writing that is accurate and neat.
- Staff use accurate assessment systems effectively to support children's learning. For example, staff have worked hard to track the achievements of boys throughout the year to make sure that they do not fall behind those of girls.
- Children are safe in the early years, and their welfare is a high priority. Communication and relationships with parents are strong. As one Reception parent commented: 'We will definitely recommend this school to our friends and have already enrolled our daughter in Reception for next year.'

School details

Unique reference number	142027
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10046624

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	535
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Lloyd Hughes
Principal	Steven Vincent
Telephone number	01638 713 430
Website	www.greatheathacademy.attrust.org.uk
Email address	office@greatheathacademy.attrust.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Great Heath Academy became an academy in 2015 and is now part of the Academy Transformation Trust.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive SEN support, or who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan, is above the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 20 lessons. Some of these were conducted jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of work in pupils' books and folders across the whole curriculum.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, the head of school, the SENCo, the early years leader, the designated safeguarding lead, subject leaders, newly qualified teachers, and the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke to a trustee of the Academy Transformation Trust on the telephone.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with members of the school council.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and spoke to them about their reading habits.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website and looked at a range of documents, including assessment information, records of the trust's monitoring visits to the school, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, and records of behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors considered 42 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View questionnaire, including 21 free-text responses. They also considered responses to the staff questionnaire and spoke to some parents at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

Richard Hopkins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sebastian Gasse	Ofsted Inspector
Jacqueline Bell-Cook	Ofsted Inspector

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