

Sir Isaac Newton Sixth Form Free School

16–19 academy

Inspection dates

4–5 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding provider

- The ambitious and inclusive vision of senior leaders, governors and trust members has resulted in an outstanding educational experience for students. They thrive because of the very high quality of education that they receive.
- Leaders, governors and trust members have devised a high-quality and specialised study programme for science, mathematics and technology students. It very successfully helps students to meet their career aims.
- Highly skilled, active and determined governors know the school very well. They hold leaders to account and encourage improvement very effectively.
- Leaders and governors have successfully confronted almost all of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. The principal, supported by staff, trust members and governors, has transformed teaching and learning, which are now outstanding.
- Students behave commendably. They take pride in their work, attend very well and enjoy their learning.
- Well-qualified and highly enthusiastic teachers set very high standards for students. Their excellent subject knowledge and skilled teaching help students to meet or exceed their challenging targets.
- Staff have instilled into students a strong desire to learn. Students work very hard, are keen to improve their work and want to succeed.
- Recently implemented systems for tracking students' progress make sure that staff intervene very quickly and effectively. Teachers support students in danger of falling behind in their studies effectively.
- Almost all students pass their A levels. A large proportion gain high grades.
- Students make very good progress in their studies. In most subjects, their work is of a higher standard than expected, given their prior attainment.
- Almost all students progress to higher education. Just under half gain places at prestigious universities.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Sir Isaac Newton Sixth Form Free School (Sir Isaac Newton) opened in September 2013. The school is located in the centre of Norwich and is part of the Norwich-based Inspiration Trust, which is an academy sponsor of a number of schools in East Anglia. The school works in partnership with the Jane Austen College, which is also part of the trust. Students attend the school from Norwich and the local area. Norwich is ranked 323rd out of 324 districts on the social mobility index.
- Sir Isaac Newton is a lead school for the Norfolk and Suffolk mathematics hub. All students are on an academic study programme made up of A levels. At the time of the inspection, there were 369 students, with slightly more in Year 12 than in Year 13.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- In order to judge the success of the school more fully, leaders should analyse and evaluate in more detail:
 - students' destinations, taking into account progression to first-choice universities
 - how well different groups of students attain places at prestigious universities
 - the destinations of students who progress to employment or apprenticeships.
- Managers should develop a clearer and more effective approach to work experience for the small numbers of students who plan to progress to employment or apprenticeships, to enable students to make informed decisions about their next steps and to prepare them for future employment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders, governors, trust members and staff share an ambitious vision to provide very high-quality education for all students in science, mathematics and technology-based A levels. They recognise the future need for more scientists and mathematicians, and have established a school where students thrive in an academic community. The principal and staff impart to their students high aspiration and a strong desire to learn. Students rise to the challenges that staff set them, make excellent progress with their studies and achieve extremely well.
- Leaders, governors and trust members have successfully designed a range of courses that cater very well for students who want to study science and mathematics subjects. The courses stimulate students and make sure that they achieve their career aims. Additionally, they make sure that students develop good social and work-related skills, through effective tutorial lessons and sensibly planned work experience placements. Students aspire to do well. Almost all progress to the next steps of their choice, with just under half going to prestigious universities.
- The principal, supported by senior leaders and governors, has introduced a highly effective and innovative research-based model that has transformed teaching, learning and assessment at the school. Teaching staff have frequent and detailed training to help them to put these ideas into practice very effectively. Teachers share good practice successfully. They all use a similar method of teaching and reinforcing learning that makes sure that almost all students understand their subjects very well.
- Leaders, governors and trust members have worked successfully to tackle almost all the areas of weakness from the previous inspection. The proportion of students who complete their courses and pass their A levels is very high, and greater than at the time of the previous inspection. Leaders and managers identify weaknesses in teaching and learning quickly. They respond very effectively to make sure that almost all teaching and learning are of a very high standard. Tutors and subject staff work closely to make sure that students make very good progress in almost all subjects.
- Effective links with local secondary and primary schools allow staff to share their expertise well, particularly with relation to their position as lead school for the Norfolk and Suffolk mathematics hub. Students from Sir Isaac Newton work closely with local schools. This helps improve their knowledge, confidence and social skills.
- Leaders and managers have formed strong links with local and regional employers, higher education institutions and research organisations. These connections raise students' aspirations for what they can achieve and give them a good insight into work-related learning. Students understand the wide variety of work available to them as a result of their studies.
- Leaders and managers assess the quality of education very well. Their evaluation is accurate and insightful, and informed strongly by evidence. Managers use lesson observations successfully to capture the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, learning and assessment. They make sure that sensible and detailed actions arising from observations lead to swift improvements. A strong system of performance management leads to improvements in teaching, learning and assessment, and to better outcomes for

students.

- Leaders and managers have very high expectations of teaching staff. They set challenging targets for teachers that concentrate on improving students' learning and achievement. Managers check progress against targets by frequent lesson observations and close checking of the progress of students. Staff undertake targeted and high-quality professional development to continue to improve their teaching, as well as increasing their subject knowledge. As a result, teaching is highly effective in almost all subjects.
- Leaders and managers have put in place very detailed and effective processes to track the progress of students. Teachers, managers and senior staff check students' progress and achievement very well. They identify quickly and support admirably any students at risk of falling behind. Teaching staff set aspirational targets for students based around the grades they need to progress to their next steps. Almost all students achieve or exceed these goals.
- Managers make sure that students understand well about wider topics outside their A-level studies. Students benefit from frequent presentations from a wide variety of speakers. They learn in detail about a diverse range of topics including healthy eating, the implications of 'Brexit' and study opportunities overseas. This prepares them well for their future.
- Leaders, governors and staff have developed a supportive and caring environment where everyone is valued. Tutors introduce equality and diversity themes in tutorial groups very effectively. For example, in a presentation on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual themes, staff concentrated particularly well on the challenges that Alan Turing faced because of his sexuality. Students work respectfully together and value the views of others.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is outstanding. Governors are passionate about ensuring the inclusivity of the school, while at the same time aspiring to the highest levels of achievement and progress for students. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well. They very successfully uphold a culture of 'no excuses'.
- Governors are highly ambitious. They have a very clear vision for the school. They set aspirational targets for senior leaders and support them well to meet these objectives. Consequently, areas of weakness improve quickly.
- Governors have high levels of expertise, with many being senior leaders in education or having other relevant experience. They involve themselves fully with the school and visit frequently. They use their skills to good effect. For example, a governor with experience of working at Cambridge University helps students with applications to Oxford and Cambridge universities.
- Governors work successfully with leaders and trust members to improve outcomes for students. For example, in 2017 they recognised that results for students studying further mathematics were not good enough. They acted quickly to make sure that senior leaders redesigned the course and changed staffing. They brought in mathematics experts from the trust to oversee improvements. The outstanding progress that current students make shows that these actions are having a positive impact.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Students feel safe and are safe. Students learn about safeguarding comprehensively during induction. They revisit topics such as 'sexting', staying safe online and understanding the dangers of radicalisation and extremism in detail during tutorials. Tutors test students' knowledge of these topics well. Where relevant, teachers incorporate information about the 'Prevent' duty and British values effectively into lessons.
- Managers make sure that staff receive relevant and frequent safeguarding training. They use links with external agencies very well to keep staff informed about priorities for safeguarding within the local community.
- Trust members and governors are particularly knowledgeable about their safeguarding responsibilities. All governors undergo annual training in safeguarding. Many of the governors have higher-level qualifications in safeguarding and excellent practical knowledge of the 'Prevent' duty. They track rigorously the implementation and impact of safeguarding by staff. For example, governors carry out safeguarding walks in the school. They frequently check students' understanding of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Leaders, managers and teachers are determined that students benefit from excellent teaching. They have put in place a strategy that has resulted in a high-quality and uniform approach to teaching and assessment across the school. As a result, all students experience a consistent approach to learning. They learn new concepts swiftly, and quickly develop a deep understanding of topics. They are very well prepared for their next steps.
- Well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers have very high expectations for what students can achieve. They use their excellent subject knowledge to plan and teach interesting and challenging lessons. Teachers set a range of tasks that stretch students of all abilities and stimulate their subject interest. The most able students complete work that is well beyond A-level standard.
- Teachers assess students' progress and understanding extensively and frequently. They use a broad range of effective assessment, including questioning, tests and class activities, as well as frequent quizzes and homework. Weekly summary lessons help students understand what they know. Students value these regular opportunities to check how well they have consolidated their learning. Students work hard to close any gaps in subject knowledge. Almost all students develop a very good understanding of their A-level subjects during their time at Sir Isaac Newton.
- Teachers give students clear and detailed feedback on how to improve their work. They use techniques such as peer assessment and feedback very effectively to engage students and help them understand the more detailed points of their subjects. Students value the feedback they receive from both their peers and their teachers. They work hard to fill any gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Their work improves quickly.
- Students concentrate very well in lessons and are keen to learn. Excellent teaching

motivates them to use lesson time as effectively as possible to maximise their progress. They enjoy their learning, and support each other very well. Students are keen to improve their work. They repeat homework, tests and assignments, having considered the feedback from their teachers. Consequently, the quality of their work and their subject knowledge are very high.

- Teachers are keenly aware of students who need extra support. They provide prompt and suitable help, both in class and in dedicated support lessons. Staff use a wide range of techniques, such as targeted lesson support, strategic use of seating plans in lessons for peer support, and drop-in subject-support lessons to help students to catch up. Students who are absent from college for long periods because of illness receive excellent assistance from teachers, tutors and academic mentors. This allows them to continue their studies and succeed.
- Students know their target grades and understand how to achieve them. Students track their progress in assessments and compare it to those of their peers, which motivates them to improve. Students agree with subject teachers how they will use feedback to improve their knowledge. Staff provide parents with detailed and frequent information on students' progress. They contact parents quickly when progress falls below expectations. Year 13 students are very confident about their A-level examination outcomes.
- Teachers use the school's clear literacy strategy very successfully to improve students' English skills. They concentrate on improving and enlarging students' technical vocabulary. This helps students to understand fully all aspects of the subject. Most students produce high-quality written work with extensive, apt and correct use of specialised language.
- Students value and use frequently the resources provided by teachers. Staff have developed and improved substantially the school's virtual learning environment (VLE) since the previous inspection. Students use it effectively to return to the content of lessons. They re-examine important concepts they may have missed or use it to help them revise for examinations. Senior leaders check how many students take advantage of the resources. Subject teachers and tutors review materials frequently to confirm their quality and currency. Large numbers of students use the VLE throughout the school day, in the evenings and at weekends.
- Staff provide comprehensive personal support for students. Students attend weekly tutorials that develop their study skills well. Students learn in detail about the 'Prevent' duty. Tutors encourage students to understand equality. They successfully raise students' awareness of the diversity of modern Britain.
- Tutors have an excellent overall view of students' progress. They are mindful of any events in their lives that may hinder their progress. They intervene effectively when needed. They draw on their established relationships with external support agencies and organisations to allow students to continue with their studies where possible.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

- Students develop high levels of confidence and become much more self-assured as a result of their time at Sir Isaac Newton. They quickly develop very positive attitudes to learning, and swiftly understand how to be effective students. They behave and attend

very well and complete homework diligently. They listen extremely well both to teachers and to their peers in lessons.

- Students take great pride in their work. They concentrate hard and ask questions if they need clarification. They submit high-quality homework and assignments to the specified deadlines. They re-work and re-submit anything that is not initially of a high standard. They are proud of their achievements and thrive in a culture of high expectations.
- Staff prepare students very effectively for their future careers. Tutors advise and support them well with planning their next steps. The newly appointed careers coordinator informs students about the opportunities available for work placements, volunteering and employment.
- Students eloquently discuss and debate topics in lessons with assurance. They show respect for others' ideas and points of view. For example, in a politics lesson, students explained in detail their perspective on political ideologies to each other. They debated and discussed their positions very successfully. In mathematics lessons, students confidently discuss their different approaches and solutions to mathematical problems.
- Students enjoy an extensive range of extra activities and societies. These extend their learning, help them to socialise and stimulate their interest in the world around them. Students take part in these activities well, and take an active role in running them. As a result, they are knowledgeable about a wide range of social and topical subjects.
- Staff have very successfully cultivated an environment where no one tolerates bullying, poor behaviour or the use of derogatory language. Students feel safe and understand well how to stay safe. They learn in detail about how to protect themselves from the risks of extremism and radicalisation. They know how to stay safe online and who to report to if they have any concerns.
- Students attend extremely well and are highly motivated to learn. In the rare instances when attendance drops, staff intervene quickly and help students very successfully to get up to date with the work they have missed. Almost all students arrive at their lessons on time and prepared to learn.
- Managers have devised a comprehensive and detailed programme of tutorials that helps students to understand how to stay healthy and fit, and how to maintain emotional and mental well-being. Staff encourage well the culture and expectations of the school. This improves students' development into thoughtful and caring individuals. Leaders, managers and staff intervene rapidly to support students whose personal problems are affecting them adversely. For example, the recent introduction of therapy dogs in classrooms helps students with mental health problems, and relieves anxiety and stress.
- Students develop good work-related skills during their time at Sir Isaac Newton. They take part in a wide range of trips and visits. Visiting speakers from major employers inform students of the range of employment opportunities connected with their subjects. The large majority of students undertake external work placements. These match well with their career aspirations. Students record the learning, skills and experience they gain and use this information successfully to improve their personal statements and job applications. However, managers do not make sure that all of the small minority of students who do not plan to progress to higher education participate in effective and useful work experience placements to prepare them well for employment.

Outcomes for learners

Outstanding

- The proportion of students who stay at Sir Isaac Newton to complete their two years of study is very high. Almost all students achieve their A-level qualifications. In 2017, over half of all students achieved high grades. Leaders and managers have planned students' studies to last two years. The vast majority of students do not take AS-level examinations at the end of year one.
- The vast majority of students make substantial progress from their starting points. They sustain this progress throughout their studies and enjoy their learning. They talk eloquently about what they have learned, both in lessons and over time, and understand the skills that they are developing. Students benefit from challenging targets that make sure they can progress to the next steps of their choice. Most students meet or exceed their target grades.
- Students' work is of a very high standard. It often exceeds expectations. As well as developing the skills they will need to pass their examinations well, they also develop good social skills, learning how to interact successfully with others. They increase greatly in confidence, which prepares them very well for life as independent young adults.
- Students make particularly good progress in biology, physics, mathematics and computing. Leaders and managers recognised that students studying further mathematics achieved fewer high grades in 2017 than in 2016. They acted quickly to improve the quality of provision. As a result, current students make very good progress in further mathematics.
- Leaders and governors check gaps in performance in great detail. They identified an achievement and progress gender gap in 2017. As a result, they have put in place a range of innovative actions to improve outcomes for female students. These actions include setting up a women's society, regrouping classes to place more female students together, and visiting events at employers aimed at raising female performance. Although these actions are starting to have a positive impact, it is too early to judge their full effectiveness.
- Staff prepare students very well for their next steps after leaving Sir Isaac Newton. In 2016/17, the large majority of leavers progressed to university. Over half of these gained places in prestigious universities. Leaders and managers have a detailed knowledge of where individual students progress to after leaving. However, their analysis of student destinations requires further development to enable them to understand fully the impact of their courses and the success of their advice and guidance.

Provider details

Unique reference number	139896
Type of provider	Free School 16-19
Age range of learners	16-19
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	278
Principal/CEO	Chris Jennings
Telephone number	01603 280940
Website	http://www.inspirationtrust.org/sirisaacnewtonsixthform

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	-	-	-	-	362	7	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Jane Austen College							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Andy Fitt, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Martin	Her Majesty's Inspector
Chris Sherwin	Ofsted Inspector
Rosemary Belton	Ofsted Inspector

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