

Sewell Park Academy

St Clement's Hill, Norwich, Norfolk NR3 4BX

Inspection dates

23–24 May 2018

| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement |
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| 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 | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders, including governors, have not ensured that pupils make good progress from their starting points in a range of subjects. In 2016 pupils' progress was significantly below that found nationally and declined further in 2017. However, the progress of pupils currently in the school is now improving.
- The impact of leaders' and governors' actions to raise the achievement of groups of pupils has been too slow. Over the past two years, middle-ability pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities did not progress well compared with pupils nationally from similar starting points.
- New and inexperienced middle leaders have not improved teaching standards sufficiently well to raise the achievement of pupils in some subjects.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in science and humanities is not good enough. In these subjects, pupils do not receive work that matches their needs and teachers' expectations are not high enough.
- Although attendance has improved, leaders have not been successful in sufficiently reducing persistent absence, which remains above average.
- Incidents of a minority of pupils' low-level disruption affect the learning of others in some lessons. This is often because in these lessons teaching does not engage pupils' interest or meet their needs well enough.
- The proportion of pupils with fixed-term exclusions is still above the national average.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's leadership has raised the expectations of staff and pupils. As a result, academic standards and pastoral care are improving.
- Safeguarding systems and practices are strong. Pupils feel safe and are taught effectively about how to keep themselves and others away from harm. Vulnerable pupils are well protected and supported.
- There is effective leadership and support from the multi-academy trust. The trust does not shy away from making difficult decisions to improve the quality of education for pupils. For example, it has strengthened leadership at the school by changing the staffing structure.
- The personal development of pupils is good. The caring ethos of the school ensures that pupils are well looked after.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in science and humanities, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment precisely to plan learning activities that meet the needs of pupils so that all groups of pupils can make good or better progress
 - teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and ensure that low-level disruption is appropriately and consistently managed in line with the school's policy.
- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - increasing the proportion of pupils who make good or better progress in science and humanities
 - accelerating the progress that disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities make so that more reach the expected standard by the end of key stage 4
 - ensuring that middle-ability pupils progress as well as those who have similar starting points nationally.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management and the behaviour and attitudes of pupils by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels have the skills and confidence to raise standards in their subjects
 - ensuring that behaviour is managed consistently well by staff so that the need for fixed-term exclusions is reduced
 - reducing persistent absence so that it is closer to the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The impact of leaders and governors over time on improving pupils' outcomes has not been fast enough. Too few pupils have achieved the qualifications of which they were capable. In 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress by the end of key stage 4 was significantly below that found nationally.
- Over the past two years, middle-ability pupils, disadvantaged, and those who have SEN and/or disabilities have underperformed. Leaders' actions to raise the achievement of these groups of pupils has been too slow. However, pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress because leaders ensure that they have extra help which supports their individual needs.
- Prior to this year, middle leaders have been ineffective in raising standards in their subjects. Outcomes for pupils in many subjects have been poor over the past two years. While the school's assessment information shows that current pupils are making better progress in most subjects, inspection evidence indicates that pupils' achievement in science and humanities remains low.
- By raising expectations and introducing new systems, leaders have improved the behaviour of pupils in the school. However, their actions have not ensured that pupils' low-level disruption in lessons is rare and that all adults consistently follow the school's behaviour policy. Although incidents of poor behaviour that lead to fixed-term exclusions are reducing, they remain above average.
- Leaders' effective restructuring of staff, and the appointment of 12 new teachers this year, has placed the school in a good position to improve more quickly. The school's capacity for more rapid improvement is evident in the development of teaching over the past few months and the quicker progress pupils are now making.
- Leaders have established a culture of respect and created an environment in which pupils feel safe and valued. The structured programme for pupils' personal development is effective in preparing them for life in modern Britain.
- The training that leaders provide has improved teaching in some subjects. However, it has not been consistently effective. For example, the focused training to improve pupils' 'attitude to achieve' has had variable impact on the effectiveness with which teachers manage behaviour in lessons.
- The school receives support from other schools in the trust. Subject specialists and experienced leaders provide evaluation of standards and bespoke support for teachers and subject leaders. While having some positive impact, some evaluations have been over-generous, leading to less sharply focused improvement planning.
- Leaders provide a curriculum which offers pupils a wide range of opportunities to learn. They have structured the curriculum to match pupils' interests and the employment opportunities in the local community.

Governance of the school

- Governance is shared between the trust and the local governing board. The trust manages the school's finances, human resources and premises. This enables the local governing board to focus on providing support and challenge to senior leaders for the quality of education, pupil welfare and safeguarding.
- Governors acknowledge that despite regular monitoring of performance information and their involvement in strategic planning, pupils' outcomes have not improved rapidly enough since the academy opened. Key stage 4 examinations results in 2016 and 2017 were significantly below average.
- Members of the trust, local governors and senior leaders are working effectively together to raise standards and so improve the life chances of pupils at the school. This is evident in the recently improved standards in teaching and progress of pupils currently at the school.
- Governors carefully analyse the spending and impact of additional money from the pupil premium, SEN, and Year 7 catch-up funding. Strategies to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities with this funding were ineffective over the past two years. However, it is now evident that these groups of pupils currently in the school are benefiting from this additional funding. Their outcomes are improving. Similarly, the programmes to help pupils who arrive at the school with low literacy and numeracy skills are increasingly effective.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding which pervades every aspect of the school. Pupils, staff and parents are positive about how the school cares for pupils' well-being and safety.
- There are effective policies and procedures in place to protect and support vulnerable pupils. The school works closely with families and liaises effectively with external agencies.
- Through regular training, leaders ensure that staff are vigilant and react appropriately to safeguarding concerns.
- Pupils are well taught about how to keep themselves and others safe. They are clear and confident about how the school would support them if they were at risk from harm, and can describe how they would help a friend for whom they had a concern.
- Governors systematically monitor the procedures for checking the suitability of adults working with pupils and ensure that safer recruitment practices are effective. Their commitment and actions to improve the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures have ensured that it is a strong feature of the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although improving, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good. There is too much variation in the effectiveness of teaching across subjects. Consequently, in some subjects, including science and humanities, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- In some lessons pupils are bored because teachers do not plan learning which engages and interests them. In these lessons pupils are easily distracted and do not sustain concentration for long periods.
- Although behaviour in lessons is improving, some teachers do not effectively apply the school's policy for managing behaviour. In humanities, for example, teachers do not have consistently high expectations of behaviour, and fail to intervene when pupils call out, distract others or are off task.
- Pupils pointed to English and mathematics as the subjects where teaching and learning are strongest. In these subjects, pupils make the most progress because:
 - teachers have secure subject knowledge which they use to plan learning that sustains pupils' interests and fosters a hunger for knowledge
 - teachers tailor activities to match pupils' different abilities and needs
 - tasks challenge pupils' thinking and develop their problem-solving skills
 - there are positive relationships between teachers and pupils.
- However, when these features are not consistently present, pupils' progress is slow. In science, for example, the level of challenge is not always well-judged. Teachers are not doing enough to identify and fill the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding which would enable them to make better progress.
- Systems are in place to improve the consistency with which teachers address the individual needs of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The impact of these improvements has been slow over the past two years, but this year has accelerated.
- Leaders' development of pupils' subject-specific vocabulary and general writing skills is clearly focused and is beginning to have a significant impact on improving the rate of pupils' progress across subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe at school. Staff give the welfare of pupils the highest priority and provide effective care for individuals. The school has been particularly successful in supporting pupils with mental health needs.
- Pupils and staff enjoy positive relationships. Although sometimes lacking in confidence, pupils are polite to visitors and are able to communicate well with adults.

- Incidents of bullying are rare and well managed by staff when they do occur.
- Staff liaise closely with alternative providers to monitor the progress, attendance, behaviour and welfare of the few pupils who access courses away from the school. These opportunities are having a positive impact on the attitudes and progress of these pupils.
- Leaders plan and structure pupils' personal, social, health and economic education to ensure that they know how to keep themselves and others safe and healthy, and to develop the attributes they need for life in modern Britain. Pupils demonstrate maturity, empathy and sensitivity when discussing complex issues such as the social impact of drug misuse.
- Leaders are acutely aware of local issues that concern pupils and their families, and tailor their welfare provision accordingly. For example, some pupils take an additional course in finance, which equips them with the skills they need to help avoid debt and financial exploitation.
- The careers advice, guidance and support the school offers are highly personalised and enable pupils to make effective choices about their futures. The vast majority of pupils remain in education, employment or training after leaving school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- When the school became an academy, leaders recognised that the quality of behaviour was not good enough. Even though inspection evidence shows that behaviour is improving, it is not consistently good.
- A significant proportion of pupils, parents and staff report that behaviour is not good. Some pupils said that in many lessons poor behaviour distracts them from learning.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are reducing because of more effective behaviour management by staff. However, fixed-term exclusions, although reducing, remain high.
- Leaders have improved overall attendance effectively; it is now broadly average. However, persistent absence remains high, and leaders do not sufficiently monitor the absence patterns of different groups of pupils.
- At break- and lunchtimes pupils get on well together. Teachers foster positive relationships by opening their classrooms to provide pupils with a quiet place to socialise. Additionally, they offer pupils a range of extra-curricular activities, including, for example, challenging pupils to an informal game of table tennis.
- Most pupils arrive to lessons on time, equipped and ready to learn.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- At key stage 4, the overall progress that pupils made from their different starting points was well below that found nationally in 2016 and declined further in 2017. Improvements in pupils' outcomes have not been rapid enough since the school became an academy. Too many pupils have left the school without the qualifications they needed to make a good start in further education.

- The overall progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities from their different starting points has been significantly below national averages. Disadvantaged pupils have underachieved across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, in 2016 and 2017. Inspection evidence indicates that there have been improvements in the progress of current pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged.
- Middle-ability pupils have most significantly underachieved over the past two years. In 2016 the most able pupils made progress which was broadly in line with the national average. However, their performance declined significantly in 2017 across a range of subjects. Leaders have rightly identified most-able boys as a key underperforming group. Close tracking of progress and extra help have ensured that different groups of pupils from similar starting points have achieved better in recent months.
- Progress of pupils in 2016 was significantly below average across a range of subjects, including science and the humanities. In 2017 standards in these subjects remained low; they declined in English and mathematics to below average.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make consistently good progress because of the school's timely and targeted support of individuals.
- Pupils across year groups, particularly those at key stage 3, are now developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of subjects, particularly in English and mathematics. The progress that pupils make in science and the humanities is improving, but at a slower rate than expected because of the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders have successfully introduced a range of strategies to improve pupils' literacy skills. This is securing better achievement for pupils across many subjects.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 142058 |
| Local authority | Norfolk |
| Inspection number | 10046632 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 473 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Geoff Sadler |
| Headteacher | Penny Bignell |
| Telephone number | 01603 411721 |
| Website | www.sewellparkacademy.co.uk |
| Email address | office@sewellpark.org |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- Sewell Park Academy is smaller than the average sized secondary school.
- The school opened as an academy in September 2015, sponsored by the Rightforsuccess Trust.
- The sixth form was closed in the summer of 2016.
- A small proportion of key stage 4 pupils receive some of their education away from the school, at the Junction, which is led by Eaton Hall Specialist Academy and St Edmunds Society.
- The majority of pupils are White British. Around a quarter of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A quarter speak English as an additional language, which is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is slightly above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.

- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 31 classes, covering a wide range of subjects. Learning was jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and observed tutor periods, assemblies, extra-curricular activities, lunchtime and breaktimes, and pupils' arrival to and departure from the school.
- Meetings were held with teachers and non-teaching members of staff, the headteacher and other school leaders, governors, the chief executive and other representatives of the trust.
- Formal and informal discussions took place with pupils from all year groups.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 17 parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the nine free-text responses. Inspectors also analysed parent surveys gathered by the school over the past year. These covered the same questions as Parent View but represented the views of a greater proportion of parents.
- Inspectors took account of the 23 pupil survey responses and the views of 48 members of staff who completed the staff questionnaires.
- The school's website and a wide range of documentation were reviewed, including policies, minutes of governors' meetings, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, and behaviour and attendance records.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Vivien Corrie-Wing, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Duncan Cooper | Ofsted Inspector |
| John Wilson | 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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