

King's Lynn Academy

Queen Mary Road, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 4QG

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching remains inconsistent. Not all teachers apply the school's agreed procedures for teaching and assessing pupils' work.
- Inconsistencies in questioning, use of support assistants and pupils' presentation limit their progress.
- Not all teachers plan learning matched to pupils' different abilities, particularly the most able pupils.
- Not all boys, especially the most able, work hard enough to achieve their best.
- Leaders' actions to improve behaviour have enabled pupils to make better progress. This is not consistent in all subjects or groups of pupils.
- Pupils make less progress in science and some foundation subjects than in English and mathematics.
- The pupil premium helps to re-engage disadvantaged pupils in learning. Their progress remains lower than that of others.
- Last year's curriculum prevented some pupils from making the progress expected of them.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal provides clear, coherent leadership. He and his team of senior leaders have tackled successfully the ingrained weaknesses inherited at the time of the last inspection.
- The school achieved its best ever results in English and mathematics in 2018.
- Good teaching in mathematics leads to good progress made by pupils.
- All staff demonstrate a corporate willingness to improve the school further.
- School is a safe, enjoyable place to be. Attendance is rising.
- Sustained improvements have been made to pupils' behaviour. A new unit to manage the behaviour and welfare of pupils at risk of exclusion is working well.
- Safeguarding arrangements are fully established. Keeping pupils safe from harm is a top priority.
- Trust leaders demonstrate a clear vision for the school and its links within the local community.
- An interim executive board (IEB) provides leaders with regular support and challenge to secure improvements.

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 in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - checking that teachers always plan learning that challenges the most able, and encourages the most able boys to work as hard as they can
 - providing teachers with further training to improve their questioning skills
 - providing pupils with time in lessons to consider and respond to the regular feedback from teachers
 - making full use of classroom assistants in lessons.
- Raise overall achievement further by:
 - monitoring routinely the impact of teaching on the learning and progress of pupils in all subjects
 - taking further action in subjects that are not improving at the same rate as others
 - ensuring that the pupil premium is used to build on the initial gains made this year and leads to the improved progress of all disadvantaged pupils.
- Ensuring that the 'forward step' unit leads to significant gains in improving the behaviour and attitudes of pupils and retains them in learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- At the last inspection, the school was judged to be inadequate. A prolonged period of uncertainty and staffing changes then slowed the implementation of plans to make improvements. At this stage there was insufficient capacity within the school to secure much-needed improvement. Six months later the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust took control of the school.
- Since then, the school has undergone a journey of sustained improvement, led by the principal in partnership with the chief executive of the academy trust. Together they have transformed the school's culture and ethos. Pupils say that school is now a safe, stimulating and enjoyable place to be. They care for one another and are respectful towards staff. Pupils and staff appreciate the changes made. Parents and the local community also recognise the impact that leaders have had. The school is oversubscribed this year.
- Self-evaluation is thorough and largely accurate. Regular monitoring and evaluation ensures that the principal and trust leaders know where the strengths and weaknesses lie. Leaders also recognise the need to provide much more challenge for the most able pupils, especially boys. They have also identified that teachers in the English department need to raise their game to match the achievement that pupils make in mathematics.
- A strengthened team of senior and middle leaders have added much greater capacity to lead improvements. Senior leaders' expectations of subject leaders are much higher; they hold them to account for evaluating the effectiveness of their departments and acting to improve them. The leaders of a small minority of subjects that are not performing as well as others are challenged systematically by senior leaders to make improvements.
- Until recently, a vice-principal has coordinated effectively the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. She has ensured that funding for SEN is spent wisely on meeting the different needs of pupils. Education, health and care plans are maintained in a timely way. This has placed considerable strain on meeting her other duties and responsibilities as a senior leader. A new coordinator is now being trained and mentored to lead this area.
- Leaders did their best to rescue pupils from a poor-quality curriculum that they inherited in 2017. Courses where teaching was not good enough and pupils were clearly underachieving were stopped. This was done to prevent further underachievement and to fill the gaps in older pupils' knowledge and understanding in English and mathematics.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. Most of it is spent on the 'passion with purpose' base, to provide intensive, personalised care and support for disadvantaged pupils. Led by an inspirational 'pupil premium champion', she and the principal have worked collaboratively to reconnect with a significant proportion of disadvantaged pupils who were regularly absent from school and re-engage them in learning. This has worked well. This year, all disadvantaged pupils attended school and sat GCSE examinations.

Governance of the school

- The trust's bold actions to provide the school with effective leadership have led to most of the areas for improvement raised in the last inspection being resolved. Trust leaders have also provided the school with interim financial support as the school becomes more popular with parents and numbers of pupils rise.
- An IEB set up to oversee the school's improvement in 2017 has provided regular support and challenge for leaders to make the much-needed improvements to the school. IEB members are knowledgeable, professional and provide astute governance. They share the same vision and ambitions of the trust and the principal for the school.
- Routine meetings with senior leaders and the trust ensure that members of the IEB are well informed and know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They have engaged fully in Ofsted's monitoring inspections of the school over the past two years and have ensured that leaders respond to issues raised.
- Working alongside the trust, they have been instrumental in facilitating the opening of the 'forward step' unit. Their recent review of this facility indicates that it is already making an impact.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All checks are carried out when appointing adults to work with children. A member of the IEB makes periodic checks that the single central record is suitably maintained, and all employment checks are made.
- The school grounds are secure, and entry to school buildings is carefully controlled.
- Safeguarding policy and procedures are followed by staff to keep pupils safe and to inform parents and staff about what to do if they want to raise a concern. Strong relations with a range of support agencies are firmly established.
- A designated leader and her deputy manage the school's child protection arrangements effectively. They follow up concerns in a timely way and maintain detailed records.
- All staff are suitably trained to identify pupils at risk of harm. Staff receive annual safeguarding training, including on the 'Prevent' duty, to spot those pupils at risk of radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Previous Ofsted monitoring inspections and this inspection confirm that teaching, learning and assessment have improved steadily over the past two years. However, further improvements are needed because teaching remains too inconsistent.
- Despite the sustained efforts of senior leaders to improve teaching, the overall quality still varies. Staffing changes over time, including the recent appointment of several new teachers this term, have helped to strengthen teaching by bringing new ideas and talents into the school. However, these changes have also led to some inconsistencies in applying the school's agreed teaching policy and procedures.

- Not all teachers plan learning matched to pupils' different abilities, particularly for the most able. Tasks are not always sufficiently demanding, so pupils are not fully challenged to achieve their best. Most teachers provide different tasks for pupils to choose, but they do not always guide pupils towards the right level for them.
- Not all teachers make full use of classroom assistants to aid pupils' learning. Where learning is most effective, they lead learning with small groups of pupils, or provide pupils with intensive, one-to-one support, in line with the school's own guidelines. Too often, classroom assistants are not deployed effectively, and make a minimal contribution to pupils' learning.
- Most teachers mark pupils' work diligently in line with the school's own policy. They praise pupils when they produce good-quality work. They highlight spelling errors and expect pupils to correct them. However, not all staff follow the policy to provide pupils with time to respond to the comments written in their books. This undermines what teachers are trying to achieve, because their good-quality advice and guidance is not acted upon by pupils. At times, poor presentation and unfinished work is left unchallenged by teachers.
- Where teaching and its impact on learning is most effective, notably in mathematics, pupils make good progress. Teachers' planning of learning includes different tasks for pupils to choose, depending on their confidence. Regular opportunities for pupils to practise and apply skills and effective one-to-one support leads to good progress. High expectations of conduct and behaviour ensure that no time is wasted, and learning is brisk.
- Reading is taught effectively. Most pupils are confident readers. They make full use of the library during breaks and lunchtimes. Additional funding is used effectively to enable less able readers to catch up. A reading programme and one-to-one support for these learners enables them to accelerate their reading skills.
- Inspectors noted good relations between pupils and staff. When needed, procedures to manage pupils' behaviour are generally applied effectively. Most pupils understand the consequences of poor behaviour and respond to initial warnings from staff.
- Leaders' systematic monitoring of teaching and forensic analysis of assessment information are used effectively to plan staff training to improve teaching. Expectations have been raised and staff are held accountable. Leaders have not shied away from making tough decisions when the quality of teaching shows few signs of improving.
- Newly qualified teachers feel well supported. They value the mentoring provided by experienced staff, and the opportunities to attend professional development.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The 'meet and greet' at the start of the school day sets the tone for learning. Staff welcome pupils into school and forge good relations with them. Teachers use their expertise to spot any pupils who may have concerns. They follow them up during the day to ensure that they remain fully engaged in school.

- During the inspection pupils were polite, courteous and respectful. They wear their uniforms and their badges of achievement with pride. Breaks and lunchtimes are sociable occasions; most pupils chat together in groups or play outside.
- Pupils elected as school commissioners play an important role in monitoring and evaluating the school's work and reporting their findings to senior leaders. They lead others in raising funds for charity. They are excellent ambassadors for their school.
- Pupils are punctual and arrive at lessons on time.
- Weekly lessons in key stage 3 broaden pupils' understanding of citizenship, different values and beliefs. This adds significantly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Leaders have recognised that until recently, the quality of careers guidance for older pupils has been too limited. This has been strengthened this year, through weekly information, advice and guidance lessons for pupils in key stage 4.
- There are opportunities for pupils to participate in off-site visits to enrich their learning, but pupils feel that some of them are too expensive. They feel that these big trips should be complemented by smaller, regular trips out of school to enable them to broaden their experience and understanding.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Senior leaders have rightly prioritised securing improvements to behaviour, to ensure that staff have a firm foundation to improve pupils' attainment and progress. This has led to significant gains in the quality of pupils' behaviour. Staff have been trained to manage poor behaviour consistently and reward pupils for their good attitudes and behaviour. Pupils understand fully what these procedures are.
- At times, pupils are too compliant in lessons. Teachers test pupils' knowledge and understanding by questioning them. They target questions towards individual pupils and also ask openly if anyone has the answer. This works effectively with pupils who readily engage with teachers, but not with those who prefer to let others do the work.
- The 'forward step' unit provides pupils with personalised timetables, a rich environment for learning and socialising, and high-quality support and care. It aims to help them modify their behaviour and, when ready, reintegrate them back into regular lessons. This is very new. Leaders acknowledge that the impact of the unit will require careful monitoring to ensure its success this year.
- Pupils recognise the benefits of this new unit, saying that lessons are no longer interrupted by the poor behaviour of a small minority of pupils. They told inspectors that school is a safe place to be. When incidents of bullying occur, mostly physical or name-calling, they are confident that if they tell a member of staff they will resolve it for them. They are taught about the importance of staying safe when online.
- Leaders' sustained efforts to tackle persistent absence are leading to improvement. Fewer pupils are regularly absent and overall attendance is rising. Currently, attendance is higher than it was at this stage last year.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Leaders' actions to reduce the range of courses followed in the key stage 4 curriculum led to a significant rise in the proportion of pupils in Year 11 meeting the expected standard in GCSE English and mathematics this year. Overall, results in both subjects were much higher than they were compared to the previous year. Similar improvements were seen in science, history and modern languages. All of these pupils are now in further education, training or employment.
- However, this action also led to a large proportion of pupils not studying eight GCSE subjects. Consequently, overall attainment and progress measures were low in 2018. The significant increases in attainment mask some underachievement. For example, pupils made good progress in mathematics, but much less progress in English.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities made good progress in mathematics due to the effective support they received. However, the progress of other groups varied widely. Boys made much less progress than girls in English and mathematics. The most able boys did not make enough progress to enable them to attain at a higher standard. Due to the legacy of weak teaching in science, French and geography, not all pupils made the progress expected of them.
- Disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 were encouraged back into school and all who attended sat some GCSE examinations this year. However, the proportion of them attaining national expectations in English and mathematics was low. Leaders acknowledge that as the 'passion with purpose' base becomes firmly established, it needs to make more of a difference to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- The school's detailed assessment information shows that currently, pupils in both key stages and across a wide range of subjects are making improved progress. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Almost all pupils in Year 11 are studying at least eight GCSE subjects. Much higher targets have been set this year for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Observations of pupils at work in lessons and scrutiny of their books by inspectors generally confirmed leaders' views that most pupils are making improved progress. However, this is usually dependent upon the quality of teaching, which still varies across and within subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	136202
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10055187

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	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	798
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Louise Soden
Principal	Alan Fletcher
Telephone number	01553 774671
Website	www.kingslynnacademy.co.uk
Email address	office@kla.eastern-mat.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 November 2016

Information about this school

- The school is an academy sponsored by the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust.
- Since the last inspection an IEB has overseen the actions of leaders to secure improvements.
- The majority of pupils are white British. A small but increasing number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those with an education, health and care plan, is above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school was placed in special measures in November 2016. On the first day of the inspection, inspectors decided the school no longer requires special measures and converted it to a section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors visited 34 lessons, mostly carried out with a member of the senior leadership team. On the second day, two inspectors carried out learning walks with senior leaders to validate their views on the quality of teaching and pupils' current progress.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, the chief executive of the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust, the chair of the IEB, two groups of pupils, as well as school commissioners and a group of newly-qualified teachers.
- 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' attendance and behaviour, monitoring of teaching records, and other information provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' books in lessons.
- Inspectors considered 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They considered 55 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. The questionnaire for pupils was not used.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Wilson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jenny Carpenter	Ofsted Inspector
Shân Oswald	Ofsted Inspector

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