

North Walsham High School

Spenser Avenue, North Walsham, Norfolk NR28 9HZ

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- A legacy of ineffective leadership and teaching have weakened the school since its last inspection.
- During this time, pupils have not made enough progress, particularly in science and modern languages.
- The reluctance of some staff, parents and carers to accept the changes made by senior leaders has slowed the school's journey of improvement.
- Teaching varies too widely. Consequently, not all pupils, including boys, the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make the progress expected of them.
- Pupils' writing is underdeveloped. Not all teachers reinforce pupils' use of basic literacy.
- Behaviour is not always managed consistently.
- Not all pupils or parents are confident that staff will resolve incidents of bullying.
- Recent changes to the curriculum have not been evaluated to see if they work well.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to develop their personal, social and health education.
- Careers education for pupils is underdeveloped.
- Leaders of most subjects are new. They have not had enough time to show they can contribute fully to the school's improvement.
- Governors have not ensured that the pupil premium is used wisely to aid improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, ably supported by his deputy, has raised expectations and added much-needed impetus to improving the school.
- Teaching has been strengthened. More than half of the staff are new to the school. This is aiding improvement.
- Pupils' overall progress is improving.
- Safeguarding arrangements are firmly established.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. They are polite, pleasant and well mannered.
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities and additional learning enhance pupils' enjoyment of school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Gain much greater consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - eradicating weak teaching, particularly in science
 - checking that all teachers take every opportunity to reinforce pupils' use of basic punctuation, grammar and spelling, and that they present their work neatly
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing across a range of different subjects.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use the school's agreed procedures for managing pupils' behaviour in lessons
 - reviewing the school's procedures for managing bullying so that all incidents are resolved to the full satisfaction of pupils and their parents
 - providing pupils with regular opportunities to develop their personal, social and health education
 - providing pupils in both key stages with a better understanding of future careers.
- Raise achievement by:
 - raising expectations of all pupils, especially boys
 - implementing plans for rapidly improving outcomes in science and modern languages
 - ensuring that teachers plan learning suited to the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and for the most able pupils
 - reviewing the impact of recent changes to the curriculum to ensure that it enables pupils of all abilities and interests to achieve well enough.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - monitoring rigorously the work of new teachers and leaders and evaluating the impact they have on raising achievement this year
 - identifying accurately the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils and making full use of the pupil premium to ensure that they attend regularly and achieve well
 - communicating leaders' plans and ambitions for the school clearly and coherently with parents to gain their full support.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher inherited a school with weaknesses that had not been identified at the last inspection. His efforts to tackle poor behaviour and resolve staffing issues were hampered by some staff and parents who were unwilling to accept his changes. Staff resistance and a string of complaints from parents led to an extended period of turbulence that absorbed far too much of his and other senior leaders' time. This has undermined the school's improvement.
- During this time, leaders, including governors, have been unable to secure significant improvements to pupils' attainment or enable pupils to make good progress. Not all subjects have been effectively led. Weak teaching has been tolerated for too long.
- This turbulence has stabilised. Several new leaders have been appointed to add further capacity to make improvements. There are signs that pupils are beginning to make better progress than in the past. Pupils and parents recognise the improvements being made. However, this is new and needs more time to become firmly established.
- Senior leaders evaluate the school as good. Inspectors disagreed with this. Leaders monitor teaching but have not considered the wide variation across and within subjects, or the impact this has on pupils' progress.
- Parents and pupils told inspectors about the concerns they have about poor behaviour. Inspectors and leaders visited a minority of lessons where pupils' learning was disrupted by others.
- Most subject leaders, the coordinator of special educational needs and the careers education leader have been appointed recently. They have not had enough time to demonstrate that they can lead improvement and contribute fully to raising achievement.
- Assessment information and attendance records show that disadvantaged pupils do not do well enough. Leaders' use of the pupil premium has had little effect on this. A new leader has put in place plans to make improvements. More time is needed to gauge the impact of his work.
- Recent changes to the curriculum, made to raise aspirations and encourage most pupils to pursue the English Baccalaureate qualification, remain untested. At this stage, it is unclear whether this curriculum is suited to the needs and abilities of all pupils.
- Responses from parents during the inspection show that too many of them still have concerns and would not recommend the school to others. However, responses also show that communication is improving. A parents' forum is becoming an effective means of voicing concerns and enabling the community to contribute ideas towards the school's development.
- Senior leaders engage fully with the local authority to broker support and help them to evaluate the school's work. The local authority has investigated two qualifying complaints received by Ofsted and found no evidence to substantiate them.

Governance of the school

- Governors have presided over a period of sustained underachievement which they have been unable to change.
- They have not ensured that leaders have made effective use of additional funding to improve the outcomes achieved by disadvantaged pupils.
- They have not challenged leaders sufficiently about how they spend funding to support pupils with SEND. Until recently, provision for these pupils has not enabled them to make sufficient progress.
- Governors acted decisively to strengthen leadership by appointing a new headteacher. They have challenged him to raise pupils' aspirations and improve the school's culture and ethos.
- Minutes of governors' meetings show that the governing body is well informed. Governors show a broad understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are supportive but also ask challenging questions of leaders. Finances are managed effectively to enable leaders to make improvements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The single central record is suitably maintained. All required checks are carried out when recruiting new staff to work with children.
- A team of designated leaders oversees the school's safeguarding arrangements. The senior lead for child protection is experienced, knowledgeable and manages a large caseload effectively. All concerns are logged systematically. Concerns are suitably prioritised. Serious matters are acted on promptly, in a timely way.
- Effective working relations with local support agencies and the police are firmly established.
- Safeguarding training for staff, including 'Prevent' duty, is up to date.
- Pupils are taught about how to keep safe, including when using social media.
- The school site is secure. Entry to school buildings is carefully controlled to ensure pupils' safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching varies widely within and across subjects. Although senior leaders' actions to eradicate ineffective teaching have worked, a few teachers continue to receive support to improve. More than half of the teaching staff are new to the school. The full impact of their teaching on raising achievement remains unproven at this stage.
- Low outcomes in a range of subjects, particularly science, modern languages, English, and design and technology, show that further action is needed to make teaching more consistent.
- Not all staff use the agreed procedures to manage behaviour in lessons. Pupils say that 'strict teachers' do this well and this prevents minor incidents from escalating into

disruption. Other teachers do not, and this leads to a small minority of pupils spoiling it for others. These inconsistencies lead to pupils making less progress than they should do.

- Commonly, teachers do not build on what pupils have already learned in primary school about spelling, punctuation and use of grammar. In a range of subjects, expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' work are too low, especially of boys. At times, work is minimal, left unfinished and common errors are not corrected.
- Writing remains underdeveloped. Staff are using strategies such as the 'Big Write' to improve this but not all of them show a firm understanding of how this can develop pupils' writing skills in their subjects.
- During their visits to lessons, inspectors saw very few support assistants working alongside pupils with SEND in lessons. Teachers do not use the information contained in 'pupil passports' to plan learning matched to the individual needs of these pupils.
- Teaching is improving. Senior leaders have tackled ingrained weaknesses. A large proportion of staff have left the school. New staff are using their good subject knowledge to provide fresh ideas and new approaches. Discussions with pupils confirmed that they know where the best practice lies and can explain how this helps them to learn well.
- Where teaching is good, pupils behave well. Teachers forge good relations with pupils and make their expectations of them clear. Pupils respond positively when teachers plan learning that captures and retains their interest.
- Regular half-termly assessments provide leaders with evidence of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Inspectors' analysis of this information and observations in lessons confirmed notable strengths in mathematics, humanities and some English lessons. Significantly, here, work in pupils' books reflected teachers' high expectations of pupils to produce regularly good-quality, well-presented work.
- Reading is taught effectively. The small sample of Year 8 pupils who read aloud to inspectors did so with confidence and fluency. Additional funding is used effectively to enable less-able pupils in Year 7 to catch up. A reading programme and regular teaching in small groups enable these pupils to improve their spelling fluency in reading and gain confidence in numeracy.
- Newly qualified teachers feel well supported. Their mentors and heads of department provide them with support in managing behaviour and enable them to access additional training to develop their practice.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Currently, the curriculum provides too few opportunities for pupils to learn about personal and social matters such as relationships, finance and the risks posed by extremist views and radicalisation. Pupils show a limited understanding of British

values. They told inspectors that they want to learn more about these important issues.

- Careers guidance and advice are underdeveloped. Younger pupils have very few opportunities to learn about the careers available to them before they choose which subjects to pursue at key stage 4. A new careers education leader is aware of the new national requirements and is acting to improve provision. More time is needed for this to become firmly established.
- Previous arrangements to provide pupils with space to go to if they felt vulnerable, concerned or unwell have changed this year. Pupils feel that in the past this space provided a nurturing, safe environment for them to go to if they had concerns. They are currently unclear about the new arrangements and where they can go to get personal care and support.
- Leaders' actions to improve attendance are effective. Most pupils attend school regularly. Attendance rates and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school are broadly average. However, the school's current records show that a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils are regularly absent. Leaders acknowledge that this is undermining the actions they are taking to raise their overall achievement.
- A broad range of activities enrich the curriculum. This contributes well to pupils' enjoyment and their social and cultural development. For example, Year 7 pupils have the chance to learn a musical instrument, Year 8 pupils visit the theatre and Year 9 pupils pursue the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Not all pupils behave well enough in lessons. This ranges from compliance and passivity, to low-level disruption that affects the learning of others. Not all teachers manage this well enough. Not all pupils show enough self-control or maturity, especially boys.
- A small minority of pupils do not show enough respect and consideration of others when moving around the school. Pupils say that there are 'pinch-points' such as corridors, entrances and stairwells and this makes them feel unsafe.
- Not all pupils feel that incidents of bullying, mostly name-calling and being aggressive towards others, are dealt with effectively. Not all of those who met with inspectors felt that if they reported an incident it would be followed up by staff to their satisfaction. Similar views were expressed by parents during the inspection.
- Leaders can show that there are systematic procedures to manage incidents of bullying. However, the negative responses from pupils indicate that it is unclear what constitutes bullying, and what leads to staff taking effective action to stop it from happening again.
- Permanent and fixed-term exclusions from school have been high in the past but have declined this year. Leaders feel that this sanction is used only as a last resort when every other action has been taken, or when pupils' actions put other pupils and staff in danger.
- Throughout the inspection, pupils were polite, respectful and helpful. They wear their

uniforms and badges to reward behaviour and achievement with pride.

- Breaks and lunchtimes are social occasions where pupils mix together well. A lack of space in the dining room leads to some pupils eating their lunch sitting on the floor, which is far from ideal.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The turbulence experienced over the last few years has deflected the attention of senior leaders away from prioritising raising achievement. Overall attainment has remained low and pupils have not made enough progress by the end of key stage 4. The proportion of pupils leaving school and securing places in further education, training or employment has remained below average.
- Pupils make less progress in English compared to mathematics because the quality of teaching of mathematics is generally stronger. Girls usually outperform boys. Far fewer boys attain the expected standard in English and mathematics compared to girls. Teachers have been unable to stimulate boys' interest and get them to behave themselves and work hard, particularly in English.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors shared their concerns about the regular changes of staffing in science and the impact this is having on their learning. Inspectors found notable weaknesses in science, modern languages, and design and technology, and the development of literacy, which currently limits pupils' progress.
- Assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils underachieve. The pupil premium has had little impact on raising their attainment and progress. A new leader has been charged with improving this.
- Results over time show that the most able pupils have not been fully stretched to achieve their very best. This trend continues. In a range of subjects, teachers do not plan sufficiently challenging work for them. Leaders are aware of this and have prioritised it in the school improvement plan. Other initiatives such as 'the brilliant club' and additional, self-directed study after school have been introduced to raise the achievement of the most able.
- Outcomes for pupils with SEND have remained low because this aspect of the school's work has not been led effectively. A new, recently trained coordinator is now leading improvement. A small team of assistants provides regular support for pupils who have education, health and care plans. Support for other pupils is much more variable.
- Observations carried out jointly with senior leaders confirmed leaders' most recent assessments that, in general, pupils in both key stages are making improved progress. This is because teachers who have recently joined the school are much more effective. Good progress was noted in most subjects. However, this is not consistent.
- Staff are working hard to improve outcomes. Pupils in Year 11 are expected to attend an extended school day to fill any gaps, deepen their learning and ensure that they are fully prepared for future examinations.
- Good results were achieved in a range of vocational subjects last year. This year, leaders have limited pupils' choice of these courses to raise their aspirations and encourage them to study GCSE subjects. This requires careful monitoring to ensure

that pupils of all abilities and interests can attain the qualifications they want.

School details

Unique reference number	121154
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10048837

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	695
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alex Robinson
Headteacher	Neil Powell
Telephone number	01692 402581
Website	http://northwalshamhigh.norfolk.sch.uk
Email address	head@northwalshamhigh.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 April 2015

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average secondary school, serving a rural part of Norfolk.
- The large majority of pupil are White British. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND, including those with an education, health and care plan, is above average.
- A new headteacher has led the school since 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 35 lessons. Some observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders to validate their views on the quality of teaching and pupils' current progress. They also carried out a learning walk, briefly visiting English lessons in Years 9 and 10.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, a representative of the local authority, three governors including the chair of the governing body, four newly qualified teachers and two groups of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures, self-evaluation and improvement planning, minutes of governors' meetings, records of pupils' attendance and behaviour, monitoring of teaching records, and other information provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' books in lessons, and a sample of boys' work provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors considered 68 free texts from parents, and 132 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They also held telephone conversations with three parents and read one email and two letters from parents.
- The Ofsted questionnaires for staff and for pupils were not used by senior leaders.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Whear	Ofsted Inspector
Al Mistrano	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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