

# City Academy Norwich

299 Bluebell Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR4 7LP

## Inspection dates

18 to 19 June 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Significant leadership and staffing changes have slowed the pace of improvement.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies across subjects. Pupils do not make consistently strong progress or achieve good outcomes.
- Assessment information is not always used effectively in planning to ensure that the most able pupils achieve their potential. Some teachers' expectations are too low.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to practise writing at length in a wide range of subjects.
- Limitations in their literacy is a barrier to learning for many pupils, especially for boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Poor attitudes to learning lead to incidents of low-level disruption, which slows the progress of other pupils in some lessons.
- Too many pupils are persistently absent. The number of fixed-period exclusions is too high.

### The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and governors are highly ambitious for the pupils they serve. In a relatively short period, they have effected an important cultural change. This has laid solid foundations for ongoing improvement.
- Strong support from the Bohunt Educational Trust (BET) has made a significant contribution to developing leadership capacity at all levels.
- Staff are vigilant and typically mindful of the safeguarding needs of the vulnerable pupils in their care.
- Governors have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, including in challenging leaders on aspects of performance that need to improve.
- The school's disadvantaged pupils' progress is beginning to catch up with the progress of other non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- Parents are increasingly positive about the quality of education that the school provides.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes rapidly in underperforming subjects, as well as the rates of progress that disadvantaged pupils, the most able pupils and boys make.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, for all pupil groups, by ensuring that:
  - all the available information is used to plan learning that meets pupils' needs and interests, so that they make stronger progress from their different starting points
  - teachers check pupils' learning systematically in lessons, so that they can correct misconceptions quickly
  - the activities set are completed, including when pupils are temporarily excluded, and that plans are adapted for pupils who already have the skills to move on with their work
  - all teachers have equally high expectations
  - pupils have a wide range of opportunities to practise and gain confidence in writing at length
  - the school's literacy strategy is applied well across subjects so that all pupils improve their language and communication skills.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
  - all staff are confident in applying the school's behaviour policy consistently and effectively
  - positive attitudes to learning are promoted effectively to minimise the incidents of low-level disruption in lessons
  - pupils' attendance improves to at least the national average, and that persistent absence is reduced.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Senior leaders have absolute clarity in their vision and ambition for the quality of education that the school offers. Despite staffing changes and a recent restructuring, the headteacher has won the hearts and minds of most of his team.
- The school has had three different headteachers since the previous inspection. The current headteacher was appointed in November 2018. From that point, working together with governors, and with strong support from the Bohunt Educational Trust (BET), he has effected a significantly positive cultural shift in the school's improvement journey.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Effective strategies are beginning to make a positive difference to teaching quality and pupils' progress. Leadership and staffing structures are more stable. Some improvement actions, however, are at a relatively early stage of implementation.
- Working together with the director of school improvement from the trust, senior leaders have taken swift action to deal with the issues arising from previous staffing turbulence, pupils' poor behaviour and below-average progress. While overall teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes are not yet good, they are improving.
- The school's 'red lines' approach to teaching has introduced a set of clear non-negotiable expectations. Leaders have coupled this with systematic and well-focused checks on the quality of pupils' learning. The information collected from these reviews is used to develop a targeted programme of continuous professional development for staff.
- Popular daily staff briefings pick up on key themes, such as the effective use of questions to extend pupils' learning and language skills. Staff value the support from their professional development coaches and the wealth of opportunities open to them to improve their work.
- Governors' capacity to challenge leaders to continue to improve has been strengthened by the addition of three members from BET to the board.
- An unrelenting focus from leaders and governors on checking that pupils attend school regularly is beginning to make a difference. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is improving at a faster rate than other pupils in the school.
- While pupils' behaviour has improved, and this is acknowledged by pupils, staff and many parents, incidents of fixed-period exclusions remain too high. This is a barrier to the learning of some pupils, many of whom are disadvantaged, as well as affecting their attendance. Leaders have begun to develop new strategies to implement alternatives to temporary exclusion, but it is too early to see the impact of this work.
- The curriculum offers pupils a suitable range of experiences across key stages. The programme of extra-curricular activities includes access to the recently introduced University of City Academy Norwich (UCAN) provision. This aims to raise pupils' aspirations and leads to in-school accreditation, with a 'graduation' ceremony for participants and their parents. All pupils can join in and benefit from activities such as

horse riding, fencing, sports, outdoor education and camping.

- Pupils receive effective careers information, advice and guidance, for example through careers fairs and individual support. Consequently, more of them are progressing on to further studies and/or training than in previous years.
- Leaders have supported the development of a whole-school literacy strategy. This is a priority because a high proportion of pupils join the school with prior attainment that is below age-related expectations. While the strategy has raised the profile of the importance of pupils' reading and comprehension, it is still at an early stage of development in subjects beyond English language and literature.
- Governors check to make sure that leaders' spending of pupil premium and SEND funding is making a difference. While the gaps in progress between disadvantaged pupils in the school and other non-disadvantaged pupils nationally are closing, outcomes for this group are still below average. In recognition of the need to continue to accelerate improvement, the school has recently commissioned an external review of the additional funding spending for pupil premium and SEND.
- Senior leaders and governors work hard to communicate effectively, and to build good relationships with parents. Under new leadership arrangements, parents are increasingly positive about the provision. As one parent said, 'There has been a huge positive change since the headteacher took over. Pupils seem happier and learning has improved. The teachers also appear happier to be there.'
- In their free-text comments to Ofsted, a few parents raised concerns about the previous staff turnover, aspects of the school's revised behaviour policy and some low-level disruption in lessons.

## **Governance**

- Governors are ambitious for the success of pupils in the school.
- The chair of governors has recently been appointed and some governors are relatively new in post. Although a newly formed team, they have a wide range of skills and experience that they bring to their role. A recent skills audit is focused on identifying any training needs and matching new governors to link roles in the school.
- Three members from BET, including the chief executive officer, offer additional support. This has strengthened the board's capacity to challenge senior leaders about the quality of education that the school provides.
- Governors maintain suitable oversight of additional funding spending, for example the funding for pupil premium and SEND. Minutes of their meetings, and outcomes of recent reviews, show that they make suitable checks, in line with the findings of the external evaluation, to ensure that improvement strategies are working.
- Safeguarding is a regular agenda item in governors' meetings. Governors understand and act on their responsibility to keep pupils safe.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- All the necessary checks are in place when new staff are recruited. The single central record of these checks meets statutory requirements.
- All staff, leaders and governors are clear about their duty to protect the pupils in their care. Child protection records are suitably maintained.
- Systematic training ensures that staff know what to look out for and the procedures to follow if they have a concern. Effective work with other organisations, including social services, health workers and the police, helps leaders to secure appropriate support for vulnerable pupils when they need it.
- Typically, staff, pupils and parents agree that the school is a safe place.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good. Staffing changes have contributed to a legacy of aspects of weaker teaching, especially in humanities. Consequently, although improving, teaching is not supporting all pupil groups to make routinely strong progress, especially for the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and boys.
- Leaders have accurately pinpointed the things that teachers do well and the areas that need to improve. Consequently, they have established clear expectations through the principles of the school's 'red lines of learning and teaching'. These principles are at the core of teachers' continuing professional development and are modelled well by senior leaders. However, teachers' own expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to practise writing at length in different subjects. This restricts pupils' chances of becoming confident, resilient writers and limits the extent of the progress they can make.
- Some pupils have gaps in their books because the teacher has not checked to see that the work set is completed. Misconceptions are sometimes overlooked. Occasionally, teachers' explanations are not adapted quickly enough to ensure that pupils are clear about what they need to do next.
- In lessons, sometimes too much of the teaching focuses on pupils in the middle-ability range. This is because teachers are inconsistent in their planning and in adapting the teaching to meet the needs of pupils who could do more, or for those who are at risk of falling behind, including pupils with SEND.
- Regular checks on teaching and learning and new assessment systems are starting to identify more accurately where pupils need extra help to catch up. These systems and procedures aim to ensure that appropriate support is put in place.
- While the quality and quantity of pupils' work varies widely between subjects and classes, improving teaching is leading to better progress, including for disadvantaged pupils, in English, mathematics and science. Teaching is especially effective in physical education (PE) and art and creativity.
- Teachers value the wide range of support now in place for their continuous professional development. They have benefited from, for example, external expertise in techniques to manage unacceptable behaviour and regular coaching from senior staff.

Newly qualified teachers say they feel well supported and settle in quickly to a full teaching role.

- Where the teaching is strongest, for example in PE and art and creativity, teachers have well-established and positive working relationships with their pupils. In these lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that they are quick to pick up on and correct any misunderstandings. Clear boundaries prevent any low-level disruption in lessons from escalating, so that no time is wasted. High expectations ensure that the work set challenges pupils from their different starting points.
- Support for the high proportion of Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with their reading is helping to raise standards. A small group of younger pupils read to inspectors with fluency and confidence during the inspection. Strategies are targeted appropriately to develop pupils' skills further and to extend their interest in reading.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development requires improvement. While most pupils inspectors met with during the inspection were polite and friendly, some of them did not have the skills they need to speak confidently about their school experiences.
- In lessons, persistent low-level disruption reflects the poor attitudes to learning of a significant minority of pupils. This is also seen in untidy presentation in books and a lack of pride in their work.
- Limitations in self-discipline mean that a small group of pupils are reliant on staff to provide a strong, clear message to manage their behaviour in classrooms and around the school.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe online. They say they feel safe in school and trust staff to look out for them. They told inspectors that while bullying sometimes happens, they know that staff will, 'sort it'.
- Regular tutorials and assemblies cover important themes, such as the British values of tolerance and respect, making the right choices and healthy lifestyles. In Year 7, these programmes are appropriately supported by the recently introduced philosophy for children lessons.
- School staff take their responsibilities for helping to protect pupils' mental and physical health very seriously. These aspects are effectively promoted through the curriculum and in the range of support services available, including through the school's well-being room. Leaders ensure that staff are vigilant if they suspect that a pupils' emotional health may be at risk.
- Effective planning supports the smooth transition of pupils from primary schools. This helps Year 7 pupils to settle in quickly. The Year 7 pupils that inspectors spoke with during the inspection said they enjoy school and felt they had 'made the right choice in coming here'.
- Pupils attending part-time alternative provision are well supported. Most make suitable

progress and effect a timely return to their mainstream studies.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Some pupils still find it difficult to regulate the standard of their own behaviour and to respond quickly to teachers' instructions, both in and out of lessons.
- While overall attendance is improving slowly, too many pupils are regularly absent and incidents of temporary exclusion are too high. This is a significant barrier to the learning and progress of these pupils when they are not in school.
- High levels of staff supervision ensure that the atmosphere between lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes is generally calm and sociable. The school's revised rewards and sanctions, as set out in the new behaviour policy, are very well understood.
- Pupils, staff and most of the parents responding to Ofsted's online questionnaires, Parent View, and the school's own surveys, agree that behaviour in the school, while not yet consistently good, is much improved under new arrangements. This view matched much of the evidence inspectors saw during the inspection. As one staff member said, echoing the views of others, 'Behaviour is better now, so we can get on with our teaching.'

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2018 made less progress than other pupils nationally in a range of subjects. Pupils' outcomes, for example in humanities and modern languages, were significantly below the expected standards.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, did not make the progress they should. Boys of all abilities performed less well than girls in most subjects.
- While gaps between disadvantaged pupils in the school and other pupils nationally are beginning to close, the difference between the girls' outcomes and those for boys remains too wide.
- The progress of pupils with SEND is showing signs of improvement. However, in line with other pupil groups, their progress remains variable across subjects. This is because the activities planned are not matched consistently well to pupils' individual needs. The extent to which teachers use the information in individual learning plans is uneven. The schools recently appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is working effectively to address this with the support of the BET director of SEND.
- Some pupils at key stage 4 still have considerable gaps in their knowledge that teachers are working to close. Typically, these gaps are linked to pupils' absence or temporary exclusion. Pupils do not always follow up on the work that they have missed when they are away from their lessons.
- In Year 7, the quality of work in pupils' books is beginning to show signs of improvement. This is especially evident in English, mathematics and science. Across the key stages, pupils make strong progress in PE and art and creativity, but their

progress in humanities subjects and modern languages is much slower.

- In 2018, by the end of Year 11, girls made much better progress than they did in the previous year. The whole-school focus on securing pupils' literacy skills is raising the profile of the importance of language and communication skills. This, coupled with the philosophy for children programme, recently introduced for Year 7, aims to further improve pupils' oracy, confidence and engagement in learning.
- A few pupils follow part-time alternative courses away from the school site. These programmes are typically successful in engaging pupils in learning because they are matched appropriately to their needs and interests. Because of these courses, pupils often make stronger progress when they return to school.
- The proportion of pupils who progress to further education, employment and/or training is increasing. Effective careers information, advice and guidance help them to match choices to meet their needs when they leave school at the end of Year 11.



## School details

Unique reference number	135904
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10103371

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	601
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mark Anderson
Headteacher	Paul Collin
Telephone number	01603 452 628
Website	<a href="http://cityacademynorwich.org/">http://cityacademynorwich.org/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@cityacademynorwich.org">office@cityacademynorwich.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	26 to 27 April 2017

## Information about this school

- The school operates as a single academy trust. It is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The school is currently in the early stages of moving to a multi-academy trust, Bohunt Education Trust (BET). This trust has been providing a wide range of support to City Academy Norwich since September 2017.
- The current headteacher took on the post in November 2018.
- The local governing body, which includes trustee members from BET, maintains oversight of the school's work.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is just above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is significantly above the national average.

- The number of pupils with SEND is above the national average and the number with an education, health and care plan is well above the national average.
- The school uses part-time, off-site alternative provision for a small number of pupils locally at the St Edmund's Support Centre.

## Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with teachers, subject leaders, senior leaders and governors, including the chair of governors and the chief executive of the Bohunt Educational Trust (BET).
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their work in lessons and in small groups. They also spoke informally with them around the school as they arrived, and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- A range of documentation was looked at, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, assessment information, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors took account of 25 staff survey responses, 53 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 24 comments in free-text responses. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a wide range of subjects. Some of these lessons were observed jointly with school leaders.

## Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jenny Carpenter	Ofsted Inspector
David Piercy	Ofsted Inspector
Georgina Atkinson	Ofsted Inspector

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