

Inspection of Felixstowe School

High Street, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9QR

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are attending an improving school. Pupils say that the new trust and headteacher are making a difference. Behaviour is better in lessons. Pupils say that they now have regular teachers who make the lessons more enjoyable than before.

Pupils are proud of the badges they earn through the 'Felixstowe Way' awards. While pupil parliament and the use of pupil voice are not well established, most pupils say adults listen to them. Students in the sixth form have many opportunities to lead and support their younger peers, such as through the prefect system or through mentoring. However, the curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is not as well developed in the sixth form.

Parents are happier with the school than in the past. Three quarters of parents who responded to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, would recommend the school. A minority express concerns about bullying and how staff deal with it. This echoes some pupils' views. Some pupils are not happy with the speed with which staff resolve some incidents of behaviour. Incidents of bullying are reducing and most pupils say they feel safe at school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Trust leaders have trained staff so that they understand how to design an ambitious curriculum. This is in place for most subjects. The teaching of religious education now follows statutory guidance. While the numbers of pupils choosing to study the subjects for the English Baccalaureate are low, they are rising. In particular, high proportions of pupils are opting to take history or geography at GCSE.

Staff understand the importance of building pupils' knowledge step by step. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They give pupils frequent opportunities to revisit key concepts to reinforce learning. Teachers' checking of whether pupils are learning in lessons is variable. This includes teaching in the sixth form. In lessons, some teachers check pupils have understood key ideas before moving pupils on. Some teachers address misconceptions and errors as they occur. Not all teachers do this. As a result, some pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable across the curriculum.

Teachers are also inconsistent in their approach to understanding how pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are faring in lessons. Teachers use the strategies outlined in pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan), check pupils' understanding and adapt activities or teaching to support these pupils. However, for those pupils with SEND who are not in receipt of an EHC plan, some teaching does not identify where pupils are struggling and may need more support so these pupils can succeed.

Leaders have introduced a new reading programme which is successfully supporting pupils to learn to read confidently and fluently. Leaders have clear plans to develop

pupil's reading habits, so they value reading and understand its importance for further study.

Leaders have invested in various support programmes to help pupils with any social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. This includes the use of a therapy dog and access to a school chaplain. However, where pupils' needs become increasingly complex, leaders are not as adept at identifying what additional support, including external expertise, may be required and sourcing this quickly. As a result, the attendance of some pupils with these types of complex needs remains low.

Students in the sixth form say that behaviour is much better around the school and in lessons than was the case previously. Younger pupils generally agree but say that there can be low-level disruption if pupils are not interested in the lesson. Pupils say there can be inappropriate behaviour in crowded areas, such as pushing or jumping into the lunch queue. Incidents of behaviours that require more significant consequences are reducing. Most of the time, pupils move sensibly around the school.

Leaders have carefully considered how pupils develop social skills and the values they need to succeed in later life. In the main school, there is a well-considered PSHE curriculum that promotes this. While the school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships, Year 11 pupils and sixth-form students would like more careers information about going to college, apprenticeships and employment. The PSHE curriculum for the sixth form has gaps. Leaders have not thought carefully enough about what young people of this age need to learn. This includes careers guidance, where there are not enough opportunities to learn from employers and experience the workplace.

Trustees responded rapidly and robustly to the findings from Ofsted's last monitoring visit. The interim executive board has sharply held leaders to account, while also making sure that leaders have the support to make a difference. The quality of provision is better and systems are stronger. Leaders are now using a wealth of information to help inform their decisions. However, not all leaders are analysing and evaluating effectively to see where provision can be improved, for example among pupils with increasingly complex SEMH needs.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Since the last Ofsted monitoring visit, trust leaders have extensively trained staff. Leaders have introduced a new system for logging safeguarding concerns. Leaders have improved their communication with external agencies, including the local authority, so that the most vulnerable pupils are safe. Staff know how to log concerns and understand their responsibilities with reporting. Staff understand the latest government guidance, including how to respond to reports of sexual harassment.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including how to respond to friend requests on social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers deliver the curriculum without checking that pupils have understood key ideas before moving on. This means that pupils can be left with misconceptions and not be clear in their understanding. Leaders need to train staff further so that teachers consistently check pupils' understanding. This includes pupils with SEND who are not in receipt of an EHC plan.
- There is some low-level disruption in classes where pupils lack engagement. When this or bullying occurs, some pupils are of the view that teachers and leaders do not respond quickly enough. This means that pupils' learning is interrupted, and they become frustrated when they think nothing happens as a result. Leaders need to continue to make inroads in tackling incidents of low-level disruption. Leaders need to ensure that pupils know what is happening around any concerns that are raised, including incidents that are deemed to be bullying.
- There are gaps in the personal development programme for students in the sixth form. This means that students do not get thorough preparation for adult life and independent living. Leaders need to consider and deliver what students at this age need to be taught to live rich and fulfilling lives.
- Leaders have a wealth of information but they do not scrutinise this closely enough to inform further actions. This means that they do not have clear insight into key issues, such as making sure pupils with complex SEMH needs have their needs well met. Trust leaders need to provide further training for senior leaders, so they effectively analyse, evaluate and use the information available to them.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	137321
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10200504
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1222
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	125
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christine Quinn
Headteacher	Emma Wilson-Downes
Website	www.fxa.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 and 24 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Unity Schools Partnership at the beginning of September 2019, having been rebrokered from a different multi-academy trust. The current headteacher started in October 2019.
- After the Ofsted monitoring visit in June 2021, the local governing body was temporarily paused and an interim executive board took over the function of governance.
- The school uses three different alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors spoke with trustees from the interim executive board, the chief executive officer of the trust and the director of secondary education from the trust. Inspectors also spoke to the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils about the school's provision.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, history and art to evaluate the quality of education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at the curriculum plans for other subjects and spoke with pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors considered the provision for PSHE, religious education, and relationships, sex and health education. Inspectors reviewed curriculum plans and spoke with pupils and leaders.
- Inspectors met with the leader in charge of SEND and scrutinised documentation for SEND. Inspectors observed support for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's information on behaviour, bullying and attendance. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records and spoke with trustees, trust leaders, a local authority representative, leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors considered the 94 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 65 free-text comments.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sue Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Adam Cooke	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kim Pigram	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Milligan	Her Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021