

Inspection of Northampton International Academy

Barrack Road, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN1 1AA

Inspection dates: 31 January to 3 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

There are some substantial concerns about this school. Many parents and carers, pupils and staff who expressed a view are worried about safety at the school. Many of these pupils say that they are unhappy here.

The behaviour in the primary phase is much better than in the rest of the school. However, some pupils in the primary phase say that they do not feel safe and that older pupils disturb their learning. Many of the pupils that inspectors met in the school's secondary phase said that they believe the poor behaviour they experience every day is having a negative effect on their education. Pupils' behaviour in this phase regularly disrupts lessons. Some staff say that they feel overwhelmed by the poor behaviour of the pupils in the secondary phase. They feel that they do not get the help they need from leaders to do their jobs well.

Many pupils do not feel that school leaders deal with bullying effectively. They say that they report bullying but nothing changes. Some parents are frustrated because they feel that leaders do not listen to their concerns about bullying.

Leaders are mindful of the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on pupils' well-being. They have put in place strategies to support pupils in this, including through setting up the new mental health hub.

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

Leaders, including those from the trust, and governors have failed to act swiftly enough to address poor behaviour. They have not supported staff adequately to help them manage pupils' behaviour effectively. Too many pupils in the secondary phase are late to lessons, behave poorly in lessons or remain in the corridors when they should be in classrooms learning. They disrupt others' learning. Too many show a lack of respect to staff and to other pupils. Too often, pupils' behaviour, particularly outside of lessons, makes other pupils feel unsafe. Inspectors saw pupils behaving poorly. Sometimes, staff did not challenge this behaviour. A significant proportion of staff, parents and pupils do not have confidence in the leaders' ability to bring about the necessary improvements.

Some pupils in the secondary phase are concerned about the lack of equality and the presence of harassment from other pupils. They say that the regular racist and homophobic remarks of some pupils make it hard to be different in the school. Leaders have taken some measures to resolve this. It is too soon to see what impact these measures will have.

Leaders have started to construct a well-considered curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. Leaders recognise that this process is not yet complete. In some subjects, leaders have identified the important knowledge they want pupils to learn. In these subjects, teachers plan lessons that enable pupils to build their knowledge and skills step by step. This enables pupils to remember more about what they have

been learning and learn new knowledge. This is best seen in the primary phase and in some subjects in the secondary phase. However, this is not the case in all subjects. In some, pupils do not learn the important knowledge that they need to engage with new learning.

Many pupils in the secondary phase who expressed a view said they were fed up with the constant change of teachers. They say that the new staff do not always know what the pupils have learned previously nor what they need to move on to next. The impact of COVID-19 on staff's absence across the school has made the situation worse.

Some parents whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) feel that staff do not cater well for their needs. The appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator has begun to have a positive impact for pupils with SEND in the secondary phase.

New leadership has brought greater stability to the sixth-form provision. Students appreciate the support these new leaders provide. Students have good attendance and most benefit from quality teaching from knowledgeable staff. However, this is not the case in all subjects. The careers advice and guidance provision does not help students prepare for future opportunities and employment consistently well.

Teaching pupils how to read as soon as possible is a priority for leaders. This starts in the early years as children learn to use their phonics skills to decode the books they read. Some struggle with this and do not always get the expert help they need to become fluent readers. Leaders have not made sure that all staff have had the training they need to help pupils learn to read. Sometimes, the books pupils read are not well matched to the sounds they know. This makes it harder for them to become confident readers as quickly as possible.

Children in the early years enjoy structured learning opportunities. They also enjoy 'learning invitations' when playing. These help them to understand how best to behave and to treat others, including through learning to take turns.

Pupils have access to a range of sporting opportunities outside of school hours. Some pupils say that they enjoy trips to the pantomime and visits to universities. Pupils in the primary phase engage well with personal development lessons. However, older pupils do not take lessons in personal, social, health and economic education seriously. As a result, some older pupils miss out on important knowledge they need for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Too many pupils, and some staff, do not feel safe in school due to the behaviour of some pupils. They have little confidence that the leaders will address concerns about their safety.

Leaders have not ensured that staff maintain accurate registers. For example, they do not record pupils' absence correctly. Leaders are not effective in addressing occasions when pupils who are present at school choose to miss lessons.

Leaders have not maintained the improvements to safeguarding noted at the previous inspection. They do not always maintain detailed, accurate records of their work to keep pupils safe, including vulnerable pupils. Leaders do not have a sufficiently precise understanding of the number and nature of incidents that have taken place that could be a safeguarding concern.

Leaders involve appropriate outside agencies to safeguard pupils. However, leaders have not always acted with sufficient urgency to ensure that pupils get the support they need.

Pupils in the school's secondary phase have not had enough teaching to ensure that they know how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that pupils and staff are safe or feel safe at the school. A significant number of pupils, staff and parents have raised concerns about safety at the school. Many feel leaders do not listen to them when they raise these concerns. The behaviour of pupils, particularly outside of lessons, makes other pupils feel unsafe. Some female pupils feel that leaders are unconcerned about their welfare, especially around the access to toilets. Leaders do not ensure that their systems for registering attendance are accurate. Leaders need to ensure that their actions, systems and procedures work effectively to make sure that staff and pupils are safe and feel safe.
- The behaviour and attitudes of some pupils at the school are poor. Many staff struggle to manage frequent incidents of poor behaviour and feel unsupported by leaders. This behaviour is having a significant negative impact on pupils' learning, particularly in the secondary phase. Many pupils, staff and parents feel that leaders do not listen to their concerns about behaviour and safety. Leaders should ensure that the necessary change is brought about to the school's culture, including through engaging with all stakeholders, so that all pupils may be able to engage with learning and be successful.
- There is not a well-planned and sequenced curriculum in place that builds from the early years through to Year 11. This means that pupils do not always learn the important information they need at the right time. Leaders need to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are coherently planned and sequenced so that pupils can build up their knowledge over time.
- A significant number of pupils in the secondary phase do not value the school's personal development programme. Not all staff have the knowledge they need to deliver topics on the programme. Pupils are missing out on important knowledge

they need for life in modern Britain. This is reflected in the way some pupils treat others who are different from them. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils benefit from a high-quality and engaging personal development programme, taught by staff who have the necessary knowledge of the topics they deliver.

- The implementation of the phonics programme is not yet consistent, including in the early years. Not all staff have the subject knowledge that they need. They do not always address misconceptions. In some cases, books do not match the sounds that pupils know. Some pupils at the very early stages of reading do not get the right teaching at the right time to help them build on what they already know. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the subject knowledge they need so that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics.
- Some students in the sixth form do not have access to appropriate careers advice and guidance. This means that they do not receive the help they need to make well-informed choices about their next steps. Leaders must ensure that there is an effective programme of careers advice and guidance in place so that students get the expert support they need.

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

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| Unique reference number | 142485 |
| Local authority | West Northamptonshire |
| Inspection number | 10221013 |
| Type of school | All-through |
| School category | Academy free school |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,821 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 141 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Kevin Crompton |
| Headteacher | Jo Trevenna |
| Website | https://nia.emat.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 9 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2016, accepting pupils into Reception and Year 7. The school has grown over the years to become the largest free school in England. It now has pupils in all year groups apart from Year 6.
- The school is a member of The East Midlands Academy Trust.
- During this last academic year, a notable number of staff have left the school and new subject leaders and teachers have been appointed. There are several permanent teaching positions currently filled by supply staff.
- The school uses three unregistered providers of alternative provision. These are: Rushmere Academy Supplementary Education; Northampton Saints Engage Programme; and Centurion Training Solutions Ltd. Pupils access these providers for vocational training courses either one or two days a week.

- 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.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspectors deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and a wide range of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science, history, physical education and modern foreign languages. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about some other subjects and carried out visits to lessons.
- Inspectors visited 'Prospect', the school's internal behaviour support area, and the mental health hub.
- Inspectors telephoned one alternative provision the school uses and visited another.
- Inspectors heard pupils in different year groups read books.
- Inspectors spent time in the early years and sixth form.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the local governing body and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors spoke with three representatives from The East Midlands Academy Trust.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the academy development plan.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Ofsted Parent View and considered the results of the Ofsted staff and pupil questionnaires.
- To judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors read the school's relevant policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and met with the designated lead for safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with a wide range of staff and pupils. They observed pupils' behaviour during and between lessons, before and after school and during social time.

Inspection team

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