

Inspection of Norwich Road Academy

Norwich Road, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2HT

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

At Norwich Road Academy, pupils' needs are understood well. They have many opportunities to develop the personal qualities and attitudes they need to be successful.

Pupils enjoy taking part in classroom activities that teachers and other staff plan. However, pupils' learning experiences in lessons can vary. They are not receiving consistently high-quality lessons throughout the whole curriculum.

Pupils are empathetic and many take advantage of the opportunity to show their leadership skills. They do this by taking on roles such as peer mediators and young interpreters.

Pupils have learned that their positive choices are important and can make a difference to everyone around them. Pupils behave well in lessons and at playtimes. They have been taught to be aware of different types of bullying. Although they say these behaviours are unusual, pupils are assured that adults listen and take action if they ask for help.

Pupils enjoy working with the kind and helpful staff in school. They see this as a selling point for their school. They share openly about how adults have supported their learning and emotional needs. Pupils say that adults are helping them to grow up to be ready for the future.

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

Leaders are in the process of transforming the learning experience of pupils. Starting in the early years, language and communication development is a priority. This creates a secure foundation for the ambitious curriculum that follows.

Leaders' high expectations for the curriculum are not fully demonstrated in all lessons. This is because some teachers have less secure specialist knowledge in some subjects. Leaders are making effective decisions to address this. They are supporting teachers to establish expertise across the curriculum. For instance, effective coaching helps share stronger curriculum practice with less experienced teachers. Where staff's expertise is stronger, pupils can recall what they have learned with ease.

A recently introduced phonics programme begins as soon as pupils start school. Most pupils are remembering what they learn well. They are given regular opportunities to practise using this new knowledge. For example, pupils take home books that are well suited to their current stage of learning. However, as in the rest of the curriculum, some staff have less secure expertise. This results in some pupils being less engaged in their learning. Pupils who need more support to keep up are identified quickly. They are provided with daily reading sessions with trained adults

who support them well. The additional practice is helping pupils to develop fluency in their reading.

In the early years, the way learning activities are set up and shared is more established. Adults in the setting work together to ensure children learn within well-known routines. This encourages children to feel settled. They show curiosity and explore the knowledge they are being taught independently. Children benefit from strategies that enrich their social and emotional skills. The curriculum in the early years is demanding and children are prepared well for learning in Year 1 and beyond.

Leaders are committed to ensuring the needs of all pupils are met. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders work closely with staff to make sure that the right support is put in place. Plans for pupils with specific needs are clear, ensuring that pupils are guided in small, specific steps towards success. This contributes toward pupils being supported well to learn alongside their peers.

Pupils are being prepared for life beyond school. Leaders have enhanced the curriculum with a wide range of additional opportunities. These are designed to enrich pupils' understanding of the world. They include educational visits that are woven throughout the curriculum. Pupils also know that information they are told or read online could be inaccurate. They know to follow their instincts and question when they have a concern, for example by using other sources of information before deciding what might be true.

Governors have a clear understanding of their roles. They monitor progress towards the agreed priorities with precision. Together, leaders are making changes that are sustainable and reliable. Leaders have considered the needs of staff in changes they have made. This has made sure that staff are motivated to achieve the best for the pupils they work with.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have built a culture around a clear commitment to give pupils a voice. Staff understand the possible challenges pupils might face. Pupils know that caring adults are always around to listen if they are worried. They know their school is a secure and safe place to learn and play.

Adults have regular training, and they fulfil their roles effectively. They are encouraged to be vigilant and share even small concerns. This is making sure important information about pupils' needs is never missed or overlooked. Leaders are proactive and quick to seek external professional advice to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have recently introduced a new programme to teach phonics. This programme is in the early stages of implementation. Leaders should ensure that all staff receive the guidance and support they need to teach the programme consistently well, with secure expertise, so that all pupils make the strongest start in learning to read.
- In the curriculum, some teachers do not have sufficiently strong specialist knowledge to teach new learning in the most effective way. Occasionally, this results in missed opportunities to make sure lesson content is ambitious, in line with leaders' intended curriculum aims. Leaders should complete the work they are doing, with a clear vision and continued urgency, to ensure consistency in the quality of what is being taught. Leaders need to make sure learning across the full curriculum supports all pupils, to access, practise and remember the important knowledge they need to be successful.

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	145029
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10212051
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	342
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Julie Perry
Principal	Julia Miles
Website	www.norwichroadacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Nursey provision, known as Little Caterpillars, for children aged three and four is provided on site and managed by those responsible for governance. They also oversee a breakfast and after-school club known as Hedgehogs.
- The school has made recent use of one setting for appropriate alternative provision to meet the needs of pupils as required.

Information about this inspection

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

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

- Inspectors held meetings with the principal and deputy principal, as well as the special educational needs coordinator and the inclusion lead.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chief executive officer and the regional director of the multi-academy trust.

- Inspectors met with two members of the local governing body, the academy council, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in five subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education, history and music. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and, where relevant, looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads, the human resources administrator, the trust director for people and culture and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation during the inspection, including curriculum plans, school development plans and safeguarding and behaviour records.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school. Inspectors also observed the behaviour of pupils across the school site at different times of the day, including playtime.
- An inspector spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors considered 38 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 38 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered 38 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and 32 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.

Inspection team

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