

Inspection of Acle Academy

South Walsham Road, Acle, Norwich, Norfolk NR13 3ER

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say Acle Academy has changed for the better. They value the school's supportive environment. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who experience particularly effective care. Pupils appreciate how leaders support their well-being as they return to school from the pandemic. This helps them feel safe and happy.

Pupils benefit from the high ambition leaders have for their education. Pupils develop rich knowledge because they receive effective teaching. They build their vocabulary and remember what they learn. Pupils develop well-articulated and considered views of their own.

Pupils learn to see beyond the rural context of the Acle community. They enjoy opportunities to build their character, for instance through volunteering for the 'Pupil Parliament'. They develop their leadership through running the various 'service areas'. Many pupils enjoy sport, such as competitive sporting fixtures against other schools.

Almost all behaviour is calm and purposeful. However, in a few lessons, some pupils behave less well. The vast majority of pupils are respectful, but pupils say there can occasionally be name-calling and harsh language. When this occurs, leaders and staff challenge it effectively. Pupils understand how leaders are strengthening the culture of behaviour in the school.

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

Leaders have planned the curriculum well. They check what pupils know when they come from primary school. Leaders identify what pupils need to learn to be ready for their next stage. Leaders meticulously break down and plan each step of the journey of learning. In physical education (PE), for example, teachers break down skills, such as serving at table tennis, into smaller parts. Pupils learn these skills and then use them with confidence.

Leaders have trained teachers effectively. Teachers know their subjects well. They are adept at checking whether pupils understand and remember what they learn. If pupils have gaps in what they know, teachers rectify this. In history, for instance, teachers saw gaps in pupils' knowledge about the Reformation. Teachers retaught this, so pupils could understand the Gunpowder Plot.

Leaders want all pupils to have the literacy skills they need to succeed in life. Leaders plan carefully how pupils can improve their vocabulary. The weakest readers get the help they need to understand the curriculum.

Pupils with SEND get strong support. Leaders identify and review the needs of these pupils skilfully. Staff get a wide range of training in how to support specific needs. They support the learning of these pupils effectively. Consequently, pupils with SEND

achieve well. They learn life skills and develop independence, so they are well prepared for their next stage beyond school.

Leaders know that some pupils have been anxious and unsettled since returning from the pandemic. This has led to a small number of instances of unfocused behaviour in lessons and some unkind language among peers. Leaders seek to help pupils change the underlying reasons for their behaviour. Leaders' new approach to behaviour is having a positive impact as staff are becoming more familiar with it and continue to apply it consistently.

Leaders prepare pupils well to engage with the changing, modern world. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and discuss issues such as consent thoughtfully. Pupils get wide-ranging and balanced careers guidance for their next steps.

Governors are experienced and knowledgeable. The trust and governors monitor leaders' work on the curriculum closely, and this has been effective in improving the quality of education. Governors work with the trust to check on and challenge leaders' work to improve behaviour.

Staff are united with leaders in their drive to improve the school. Staff appreciate the collaborative approach to planning learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a vigilant and committed approach by leaders to keeping children safe. Leaders are tenacious with agencies when they need to seek support for children. Leaders ensure they have all the information they need when making decisions about safeguarding cases. Records are thorough and detailed and show prompt actions. Staff remember their safeguarding training and show confident knowledge about how to keep children safe.

The curriculum content ensures pupils are taught a range of ways about how they can stay safe online. Leaders create avenues for pupils' voice regarding concerns, and as a result pupils feel safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of pupils experience harsh language, such as name-calling, from their peers. Leaders challenge this, but it occasionally persists. Leaders must identify the cause of this and continue their efforts to change the culture in the school so that pupils consistently treat their peers with respect.

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	138758
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10207075
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	527
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Smith
Headteacher	Helen Watts
Website	acleacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been no relevant changes since the previous inspection.

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 senior leaders, other leaders, staff, pupils and those responsible for governance, including the chair of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, PE and computing. 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 also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects, particularly art and design and technology.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the school's single central record, considered the school's safeguarding policy and procedures and spoke to leaders, staff, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the 77 responses that were submitted this academic year by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and considered 54 free-text responses submitted during the inspection. Inspectors considered the 48 responses to the staff survey, and the 65 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

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