

Inspection of a good school: North East Essex Co-operative Academy

Turner Road, Mile End, Colchester, Essex CO4 5LB

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 May 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils at the school re-engage with learning successfully after long periods out of education. Pupils are supported well to develop socially and emotionally. Younger pupils are supported to return to mainstream school or specialist settings. Older pupils who attend regularly move on successfully to education, employment or training.

Pupils who find it hard to manage their behaviour are supported to increasingly make better choices. Pupils know what is expected of them. They feel safe. Bullying is not tolerated. When it happens, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.

Pupils' individual needs are known and understood by staff. Where the curriculum is well developed, learning is adapted effectively to support pupils' learning. However, in some subjects, the curriculum is not as well developed so that all pupils achieve as well as they should. Many older pupils have some remote learning at home as part of their usual timetable. Not all pupils engage fully with this learning, so they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Pupils value the care and support staff provide for their personal and academic development. Some parents are very positive about the work of staff to help their children.

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

Leaders are at different stages in developing the curriculum. Where they have well-established curriculum plans, for example in English and geography, leaders clearly identify and organise the subject knowledge that pupils should learn. This enables teachers to build on pupils' previous learning so that pupils make strong progress. However, this is not the same across all subjects. There is variation in how well teachers

implement curriculum plans in some subjects, especially where they do not focus on the important knowledge that pupils need to know and understand. As a result, particularly in the secondary part of the school, pupils do not learn as well as they should across the full curriculum.

Leaders have chosen to deliver part of the curriculum remotely for many older pupils. Some pupils do not engage well with this learning. This impacts negatively on the progress these pupils make. Leaders do not have clear plans to improve this aspect of teaching.

Leaders prioritise reading for primary age pupils effectively. Adults have the skills and expertise to teach reading and phonics well. Pupils practise and use their reading knowledge daily. Teachers identify the support each pupil needs to improve their reading knowledge and skills.

In the secondary provision, the promotion of reading is less well developed. Teaching of the weakest readers has limited success. Gaps in pupils' reading knowledge are not precisely identified nor met. Staff have recently been trained in a new programme to support secondary pupils who find learning to read challenging. This has yet to be implemented.

Staff have secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. Older pupils study towards meaningful qualifications. They can study qualifications matched to their interests and future aspirations.

Staff have the training and expertise to help pupils become better at managing their emotions and behaviour. Disruption to learning does occur sometimes, but staff know how to deal with challenging behaviour so that it does not escalate. Leaders use suspensions appropriately. Records show that most pupils' behaviour improves over their time at the school.

Pupils' attendance is low. However, leaders ensure that attendance improves for most pupils. Leaders have robust procedures to follow up absence and ensure that pupils are safe.

Leaders' work to support pupils' personal development is a strength. They prioritise developing positive relationships and supporting pupils' emotional and mental health. Pupils are encouraged to consider and take responsibility for their actions. There is a suitable programme of careers education in place. Almost all Year 11 pupils progress successfully into further education, training or employment.

Trustees and governors ensure that staff feel well supported. Staff say leaders are considerate of workload and listen to staff's views. The trust has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It has provided welcome support during recent changes in senior leadership.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that promotion of reading in the secondary provision, planning and implementation of the intended curriculum and remote education may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide regular training so staff recognise and are alert to the risks that pupils may face. Staff know how and when to pass on concerns. Leaders act on any concerns swiftly and appropriately. Leaders' strong links with external agencies ensure that pupils and their families receive the help that is needed.

Leaders check daily on pupils who learn remotely or who attend alternative provisions. All the necessary checks are made before adults are allowed to work with pupils.

Pupils learn about the range of risks they may face, including recognising harmful relationships and risks of exploitation.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not identified the knowledge that pupils may have missed due to periods out of education. In other subjects, teachers do not implement curriculum plans consistently well. These weaknesses do not help pupils to learn and remember important subject knowledge or build upon previous learning. Leaders should ensure that they identify precisely the subject knowledge that pupils should learn. Leaders should use their checks on teaching to ensure that the intended curriculum is implemented consistently and effectively so pupils can make the best possible progress.
- Leaders have not identified precisely the gaps in some pupils' reading knowledge when they join the secondary provision. Programmes to support the weakest readers in key stage 3 and key stage 4 are not effective. Some pupils are not able to access the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders need to introduce appropriate strategies to identify and meet the needs of secondary age pupils in reading so they can become accurate and confident readers.
- Arrangements to educate some pupils remotely are not effective. Some pupils do not engage with this learning well enough to learn. Leaders should check the quality and impact of remote learning on how well pupils are learning. They should use their information to devise and implement improvements to the quality of remote learning.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, North East Essex Additional Provision School, to be good in June 2014.

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	143590
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10212035
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	155
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Roger Abo-Henriksen
Headteacher	Joanne Cookson
Website	www.neeca.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- North East Essex Co-operative Academy converted to an academy in September 2017. Its predecessor school, North East Essex Additional Provision School, was inspected in June 2014 when it was judged good overall.
- The school is part of the Keys Co-operative Academies Trust (the trust). There are two other schools in the trust, another alternative provision and a special school.
- There have been several changes of headteacher since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up the post in April 2022. Two other senior leaders left the school this academic year.
- The school has a primary school unit that currently has 21 pupils. The head of the primary school unit also holds the same role at Heybridge Co-operative Academy.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Places in the school are commissioned by local authorities or local schools. Many pupils have been permanently excluded from school or are at risk of permanent exclusion. Most have had significant periods of missed education.
- There are 45 places for pupils with medical needs or who are school refusers due to anxieties. The school also provide staff at the school room at Colchester Hospital, providing teaching for in-patients on the children's ward.

- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Fifteen have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses 10 unregistered provisions. The school also provides outreach support for pupils at risk of permanent exclusion or who need support to re-integrate back into mainstream schools.

Information about this inspection

- 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 headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff.
- The lead inspector held separate online meetings with trustees and members of the local governing body. He also met with the chief executive officer of the trust. The lead inspector held a meeting with representatives of the local authority to discuss arrangements for commissioning places at the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, English, mathematics and geography. These included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, discussions with staff and pupils, hearing pupils read and scrutiny of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and pupils' work, and visited lessons in other subjects.
- To evaluate safeguarding, inspectors checked policies, procedures and records, including the school's single central record. An inspector met the designated leader for safeguarding to discuss their work and actions to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including records of behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the 13 responses and free-text comments to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered emails received from parents. Inspectors considered 31 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. Inspectors did consider the most recent responses to the school's own pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Paul Wilson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jackie Mullan

Ofsted Inspector

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