

Inspection of Northfield St Nicholas Primary Academy

St Margaret's Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 4HN

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 July 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Northfield St Nicholas Primary Academy are happy and safe. They earn 'nicely done' certificates for showing care or encouragement towards others. Pupils trust school staff, feeling listened to and valued. Pupils use the daily check-ins or 'talk it out triangles' to let staff know if they have any worries. As a result, bullying is rare, and resolved quickly when it happens.

Pupils behave well and do their best to embody the school mantra of 'Look smart, think smart, be smart'. Pupils like the way that teachers arrange different means for them to demonstrate their learning, for example through class discussion, by creating a model or through a written explanation.

Pupils learn to be community-minded through the range of responsibilities available. These include being a peg monitor in the early years or the head boy or girl in Year 6. Pupils benefit from the experiences the school offers through its personal development programme. Pupils enjoy taking part in activities such as sleeping under the stars and growing their own food.

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

Leaders' sharp focus on helping pupils to thrive in their education is paying dividends. They have designed a curriculum that reflects their high aspirations for all pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have ensured the curriculum is planned so that pupils extend their vocabulary in each subject. Learning builds on what pupils already know. Pupils behave well and learning is rarely disrupted.

Leaders have placed reading at the centre of the school's curriculum. They have thought carefully about which high-quality books pupils will encounter as they move from the early years to Year 6. Consequently, pupils are enthusiastic about the books they read. Staff ensure pupils' reading books are closely matched to their phonics knowledge. Pupils with gaps in their phonics knowledge are quickly identified. They get well-targeted support that helps many catch up, including pupils with SEND.

In most lessons, teachers help pupils remember what they learn through recapping key information so pupils can practise and apply their understanding. Most pupils achieve well as a result. They know why some knowledge is important, such as understanding the time order of events in history and knowing number facts by heart in mathematics. In a few subjects, teachers are still getting to grips with the new curriculums. They do not always have the subject knowledge to explain concepts clearly. Sometimes they do not pick up on when a pupil misunderstands.

Children in the early years get off to a good start. Leaders have designed the curriculum to build on children's existing knowledge and prepare them for learning in Year 1. Well-trained staff extend children's language linked to curriculum plans.

Many children are keen to talk about what they know, such as describing how grasshoppers 'sing' by rubbing their wings together.

Pupils with SEND do well at this school. Leaders have trained teachers to identify and address what might stop pupils with SEND from accessing the curriculum. Teachers adapt learning to help pupils with SEND understand the same complex curriculum as their peers. Leadership of pastoral support for pupils with SEND is also strong. It helps pupils with SEND to develop their confidence and social skills. Because of this, these pupils are comfortable in lessons and many play well with their peers during breaks and lunchtimes.

There is a suitably structured personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum in place to support pupils' well-being. Leaders want pupils to appreciate important values and celebrate difference. However, the programme for pupils' spiritual development is not as effective. Some older pupils make inaccurate generalisations about people whose faith or culture is different to their own.

Governors are frequent visitors to the school. They use visits to ensure that the quality of education and school systems work as intended. They hold the leaders to account exceptionally well for the standard of education. Governors appreciate the training provided by the trust, which helps them to fulfil their statutory duties. They also consider closely staff's workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' safety and well-being are top priorities at the school. Leaders oversee the necessary checks made on new staff to ensure they are safe to work with pupils. Staff receive regular training. It helps them swiftly report concerns about pupils. Leaders rigorously follow up concerns, challenging agencies if support is not timely.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils know what information to keep private when communicating with others online. Leaders provide parents and carers with helpful information to keep pupils safe when using the internet at home.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, teachers' explanations lack clarity due to insufficient subject knowledge. When this occurs, pupils make mistakes and these are not readily noticed. Leaders must ensure that all teachers have the subject knowledge needed to teach the curriculum and a shared understanding of how best to check pupils' knowledge. This is so pupils do not get left behind.

- Pupils' understanding of different cultures and faiths is less well developed than other aspects of their personal development. As a result, some pupils struggle to identify commonalities or appreciate differences. Leaders should ensure that the school's curriculum and wider experiences broaden pupils' awareness of their own and others' culture and faith to prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

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	142016
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10227312
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	376
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gavin Robert
Headteacher	Iain Owens
Website	www.nsnacademy.com
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the REAch2 Academy Trust.
- The school uses two registered providers of alternative provision.

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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, science and design and technology.
- 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. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.

- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects, including PSHE.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and a number of other leaders, including the leader for SEND.
- The lead inspector held meetings with governors, including the chair of governors, and members of the REAch2 Academy Trust.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of school documentation and policies, including records of governors' meetings, the school's self-evaluation document and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, reviewed records and spoke to the designated safeguarding lead, teachers, support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils, including at breaktimes and lunchtime. Inspectors also took account of the 61 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views by speaking to several of them at the beginning of a school day and by reviewing the 42 responses and six free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them. Inspectors took account of the 53 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

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