

Inspection of an outstanding school: Hethersett Academy

Queen's Road, Hethersett, Norwich, Norfolk NR9 3DB

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 September 2022

Outcome

Hethersett Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at this school. They attend regularly, arrive on time and present themselves impeccably. Pupils respect each other and their surroundings. Bullying is rare. Pupils know that if bullying does happen, staff deal with it effectively and promptly. Pupils have very high expectations of their own and others' behaviour. They value every minute of learning time.

Pupils say that leaders listen to their ideas for improvements, such as the covered outdoor seating areas, water fountains and table tennis tables. Pupils attend a wide variety of clubs, activities and inter-house or inter-trust competitions. Staff take time to talk with pupils at break, lunchtime and during clubs. Pupils talk confidently and openly with adults. They emphasise how much they value their teachers.

A large proportion of pupils continue their studies at local sixth forms, guided to those most suited to their A-level subjects.

As a result, parents and carers want their children to attend this school. Although the school has already doubled in size, it continues to grow and remains oversubscribed. One parent exemplified the views of many, stating, 'Excellent facilities and brilliant opportunities, second to none with regards to pupil development and education.'

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

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders adapt the trust's high-quality policies and curriculum plans for their pupils. Almost all parents and pupils like the wide subject choice in upper school. Leaders have plans for even more physical education for some older pupils.

Leaders choose ambitious content from around the world to show how everything works together. Pupils build their knowledge logically and step by step towards their own ideas.

Pupils enjoy and remember what they learn. Teachers use effective checks to help pupils understand new ideas. Staff use quizzes to identify what pupils remember. Teachers give prompt feedback to help all pupils learn well. Pupils build on what they learned in previous years. For instance, older pupils wrote about Shakespeare's use of light to symbolise ambition, building on the simpler idea that light is good.

Pupils read widely. They access a variety of high-quality texts across many subjects. Leaders select books that support other subjects. For example, pupils deepen their understanding of Anglo-Saxon life by reading Beowulf. Leaders have clear processes for identifying pupils who find reading tricky. These pupils benefit from targeted support to help them with their reading. As a result, they catch up quickly.

Leaders share information about pupils so that teachers know how to best support them in class. Teachers deliver lessons that suit the pupils in their classes, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For example, guiding pupils' work using clear instructions, or well-chosen use of resources in art when practising shading techniques. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils accept everyone, irrespective of difference. Pupils show this by confidently reading and talking in front of others. From the start of their schooling, pupils receive well-planned advice and activities about their future steps. For instance, leaders provided high-quality experiences of the world of work for every Year 10 pupil last year.

Staff and pupils have exceptionally high expectations of behaviour. Leaders use systems to help pupils meet expectations, including daily routines called the 'Hethersett 10'. Teachers implement these rigorously and say that behaviour in school and in lessons is excellent. Leaders make sure that pupils reflect on the consequences of their behaviour. One Year 9 pupil explained, 'In Year 7, I often used to have my name on the board for talking when I shouldn't, but I learned why that was wrong and now it never happens.' Pupils say that hardly any learning time is lost.

Staff are extremely positive about working at the school. They say that leaders have reduced workload and support their well-being.

The school's academy committee and trustees know the school well. They share the principal's vision of how to make it even better. They ensure that leaders' actions are maintaining a high-quality education for all pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a thorough and robust culture of safeguarding. Staff and pupils receive regular and effective training so that they know how to spot and report concerns. Leaders routinely review records for emerging trends. They quickly act on concerns.

Academy committee members make sure that leaders know national and local risks, such as county lines. Leaders work with appropriate agencies to teach staff and pupils to understand and recognise these.

Leaders work closely with the local authority to keep vulnerable pupils as safe as possible. Leaders regularly inform staff what they need to know to help vulnerable pupils continue to learn in school.

Background

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

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in January 2016.

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.

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	140188
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10199488
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1115
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Tibble
Principal	Jane Diver
Website	www.inspirationtrust.org/hethersettacademy
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 January 2016

Information about this school

- The school opened as an academy in November 2013 under the sponsorship of the Inspiration Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school has doubled in size since the previous inspection.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider, St Edmunds Society, for part-time courses.
- 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

- 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 chief executive officer of the trust, senior leaders, curriculum leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, the careers leader, staff,

pupils, and those responsible for governance, including the chair of the trust and the chair of the academy committee.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history, computer science and design 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.
- An inspector also visited other lessons for these subjects: art and design, mathematics and French.
- Inspectors watched pupils' behaviour in class, at break and lunchtime, in the behaviour room and at other times during the day.
- An inspector held phone discussions with representatives from the provider of the alternative provision.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the school's single central record, considered its safeguarding policy and procedures, viewed a range of safeguarding records and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the 245 responses that were submitted from this academic year by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 150 free-text responses submitted during the inspection. Inspectors considered the 68 responses to the staff survey, and the 96 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Georgina Atkinson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Carol Dallas	Ofsted Inspector
Shan Oswald	Ofsted Inspector

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