

Inspection of a good school: Nelson Academy

Nursery Road, Downham Market, Norfolk PE38 9PF

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 November 2022

Outcome

Nelson Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils learn and achieve well at Nelson Academy. They get on with one another and enjoy the company of their friends. Pupils are polite and friendly. This is a warm and welcoming school. Adults want pupils to be happy and feel safe. This is certainly the case.

Adults expect pupils to do their best. Pupils work hard and behave well because adults set high standards. The school is calm and orderly. Lessons are rarely disrupted, which means pupils can concentrate on their work. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy overcoming challenges.

Bullying is very rare. Pupils are confident that if it happens, adults will help them make it stop quickly. Pupils know that everyone is different, but treat others as individuals, regardless of their culture or religion.

Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to play an active role in the life of the school and local community. The 'Eco Club', for example, meets regularly. Its members work together and take positive action, such as promoting recycling, reducing litter and planting new trees. Pupils also enjoy a range of other clubs, such as theatre, choir and many sports clubs.

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

Leaders have established a culture where everyone is treated as an individual. Nelson Academy is a truly welcoming school.

Pupils learn an ambitious curriculum. They develop rich and detailed knowledge in many subjects. Pupils remember a great deal about what they have learned. This is because teachers explain concepts and ideas clearly. Adults provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They make careful adaptations to activities where these are needed.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge of the subjects they teach. They use this knowledge to provide pupils with precise guidance on how to improve their work. For example, pupils across the school produce high-quality artwork because they learn the specific skills and techniques they need to achieve well. Tasks become more complex as pupils know more and remember more. In mathematics, pupils tackle tricky problems successfully because they have learned the important knowledge they need to solve them.

Reading is woven through the curriculum. Most pupils learn to read with accuracy and fluency. This means they can read ever-more complex books to help them learn well in different subjects over time. Most teachers are skilled at teaching reading. While they have received training to help them to implement the new phonics programme, the changes are not yet fully embedded. Consequently, the support that a small number of weaker readers receive is not precisely matched to their needs. This slows their progression and achievement.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are taught to become independent from a young age. They look after their classrooms and the equipment they use with great care. Adults are skilled at helping the youngest children to understand and use many new words. Children learn well in the early years and are prepared effectively for their move to Year 1.

Leaders provide rich and relevant opportunities for pupils' personal development. All pupils learn first aid. The youngest pupils know how to place a person in the recovery position. Older pupils know how to help a person who is choking, and how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Members of the 'pupil parliament' are proud to hold these roles and develop an understanding of democracy. Pupils are prepared well for their next steps in life.

Pupils behave extremely well in class and in the playground. This includes pupils who attend the school's specialist resource base. Pupils who attend this provision have their individual needs met very effectively. They take part in many activities with their peers, including joining some lessons in the main school when they feel ready.

Senior leaders take great care to look after staff's well-being. They consider the workload of staff before making any changes. Staff feel valued, and consequently enjoy working at Nelson Academy.

Trustees and members of the academy committee provide effective support for leaders. They visit the school regularly to see for themselves what is working and what needs to improve further. Academy committee members do not shy away from asking challenging questions of leaders to ensure that pupils continue to learn well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All adults in school are well trained to help them spot the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They understand how to report their concerns and know that senior leaders will act if needed. Pupils are confident to share worries with adults. They know how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet.

Trust leaders and members of the academy committee make regular checks to make sure that the school is a safe place for pupils to be. Checks made on new members of staff before they join the school are comprehensive and accurately recorded.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of weaker readers in key stage 1 do not receive the precise support they need to help them to catch up. This slows down their progression and achievement. Leaders should ensure that the implementation of the new phonics programme is completed quickly, along with further training needed, so that effective support is provided for all pupils who need extra help to learn to read.

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 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 good in November 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	140363
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10211053
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	421
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Julie Perry
Principal	Sarah Wilson
Website	www.nelsonacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 November and 1 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs an on-site specialist resource base provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. This provision currently has 10 pupils on roll.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- The inspector evaluated the school's curriculum plans and spoke to leaders and pupils about several other subjects.

- The inspector held meetings with the principal, assistant principals, members of the academy committee, the chief executive officer and the school improvement director. The inspector also held a telephone meeting with the chair of the trust board.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector scrutinised the single central record, and reviewed safeguarding paperwork and systems. The inspector spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, members of the academy committee and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in school.
- The inspector considered responses and free-text comments to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents and carers, along with responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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