

Inspection of a good school: Cromer Academy

Norwich Road, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 0EX

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 May 2023

Outcome

Cromer Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The culture of Cromer Academy is rooted in the heritage of the town it serves. It is a focal point where the achievements of the community converge and are celebrated. This culture means that pupils who attend the school understand and take great pride in their community. Pupils want to make a positive contribution to their school and wider society. To achieve this, they know that they have to meet the high aspirations teachers set for them, and many do so. They learn well.

Pupils have a deep understanding of the school's values and follow these without prompting. They are polite, engaging and respectful. They are confident in their dealings with each other and adults. There are positive relationships between teachers and pupils. Lessons are calm and focused and proceed without interruption. Bullying is rare, but if it happens, it is swiftly and effectively dealt with.

Pupils enjoy learning, are proud of their school and are happy. Parents and carers echo these feelings. One parent summed up the views of many, stating, 'We feel exceptionally lucky that our child attends this school. Leaders care, staff care, and the results are very happy children who want to learn.'

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. They have identified the important knowledge that pupils need for future success. Leaders have skilfully woven in elements of local knowledge. This helps pupils put learning into context. For example, they understand how world events have shaped their local community.

Leaders have broken learning down into small, precisely defined pieces. They have carefully thought about the specific information that pupils need to know and when. Teachers use this detail to plan sequences of lessons that enable pupils to build their knowledge over time. Teachers explain concepts clearly and provide appropriately structured support. They check what pupils know effectively in order to spot gaps and

misconceptions. Teachers adapt their teaching to address these. This helps pupils to construct an increasingly sophisticated web of knowledge. They use what they have learned in other areas of the curriculum and apply this in different contexts. Pupils produce high-quality work and become efficient problem-solvers.

Leaders' expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are equally high. Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers. Pupils learn in environments free from audio and visual distraction. Clear and precise explanations, carefully structured examples and accurate assessment result in pupils with SEND learning successfully alongside their peers. They progress through the curriculum, consistently producing work that is as high in quality as that of their peers.

Pupils who attend the school's specialist resource base are fully integrated into the school community. The majority of pupils in the base attend all of their lessons with their peers. Staff support pupils to develop their independence and resilience. As a result, pupils know when things are getting too difficult for them. They manage the time they need to regain their composure and return to lessons successfully.

Leaders have set clear and high expectations of how pupils should behave. All staff and pupils understand these expectations. Many pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning. They behave well in lessons and around school. On the few occasions where behaviour falls below what is expected, teachers consistently respond quickly and fairly.

Too many pupils do not attend school regularly. The number of pupils who miss a significant amount of school is also too high. This causes disruption to their learning and means that they cannot maintain the levels of progress they need to in order to achieve well. Leaders are aware of this and have begun to implement alternative strategies to improve the rates of attendance. However, it is too early to determine the impact of these new approaches.

Pupils enjoy an offer of a broad range of wider opportunities. They can learn British Sign Language, learn to cook, write for a newspaper or present a radio show. Many pupils, including pupils with SEND, enthusiastically take up this offer.

The careers programme is well planned. It provides pupils with information and guidance to make informed choices. Pupils feel confident about moving on to the next step in their education.

Leaders actively engage with staff and support their well-being. As a result, staff feel cared for and respected. They are highly motivated and proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know individual pupils very well. They understand the challenges that pupils and their families may face, including local risks. The curriculum content ensures that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders have ensured that training enables all staff to spot the signs that mean pupils may be at risk or need support. Staff are vigilant and swiftly report any concerns to leaders.

When pupils and their families need additional support, leaders act rapidly to ensure that the school is a conduit to external agencies. Leaders work to reassess pupils' needs continually. They respond and adapt their approach accordingly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The strategies that leaders have employed to engage with parents to increase attendance rates have not been successful. Levels of absence and rates of persistent absence remain too high. This means that too many pupils do not benefit fully from the intended curriculum and wider opportunities offered to all pupils. Leaders need to ensure that attendance levels improve so that all pupils have full access to the curriculum.

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 December 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	137431
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10211072
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	692
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lord Theodore Agnew
Principal	Darren Hollingsworth
Website	www.inspirationtrust.org/cromeracademy
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 December 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The principal joined the school in September 2019.
- Cromer Academy is part of Inspiration Trust.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school has a specialist resource base.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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 leaders, including the principal, vice-principal, assistant principals, special educational needs coordinator, members of the local academy

committee, a member of the trust board, members of the trust executive team as well as the chief executive officer and chair of the trust board.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, science, physical education and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, to some pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and human resources managers. The lead inspector scrutinised the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks and looked at how records relating to safeguarding are recorded and maintained. To further evaluate safeguarding, inspectors also spoke with pupils, staff and governors and reviewed surveys.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND, behaviour and attendance, careers information and guidance, pupils' personal development and bullying.
- Inspectors met with pupil groups to discuss behaviour, bullying and pupils' wider development.
- The lead inspector reviewed the 146 responses and 89 free-text comments to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. In addition, the lead inspector reviewed one letter delivered to the inspection team. The lead inspector also reviewed the 176 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and 64 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jason Howard

Ofsted Inspector

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