

Inspection of Neale-Wade Academy

Wimblington Road, March, Cambridgeshire PE15 9PX

Inspection dates: 31 October and 1 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Graham Horn. This school is part of The Active Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Lynsey Holzer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Victor Daniels. There is also an executive principal, Paul Farr.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Neale-Wade Academy are beginning to benefit from recent improvements. For example, older pupils say that behaviour is better than before. However, too many of lessons are still disrupted.

The school has raised the level of ambition for all pupils. Younger pupils in particular benefit from an aspirational new curriculum. However, there is significant variability in how the curriculum is delivered. Consequently, not all pupils learn well and make the progress they should.

Pupils have experienced significant levels of turbulence in recent months. They have seen a high number of changes to staff, including the use of temporary teachers. This has made it difficult to foster and maintain positive relationships. The majority of pupils feel confident that staff are there and looking out for them. However, some struggle to have trust in staff to resolve their concerns and worries.

Pupils feel safe. Bullying is rare. The school has well-established procedures to deal effectively with cases. The majority of pupils are polite and respectful. However, a minority use inappropriate language in social situations. While adults challenge this, pupils do not always realise how or why this may cause offence to others.

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

Recent changes within the trust have made a positive impact on the rate of the school's improvement. Additional support and capacity have been provided. This is beginning to deliver rapid and sustainable improvement for all pupils.

Since the previous inspection, the school has redesigned its curriculum. Subject specialists have developed programmes of study that are ambitious for all. They have identified the specific knowledge pupils need to know, including by when.

The delivery of the curriculum, including in the sixth form, and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is inconsistent. In some subjects, teaching is well constructed. Simple instructions and well-crafted examples help pupils learn well. However, at times, teaching lacks this precision. Explanations are not clear and sometimes confusing. Teaching strategies, including the selection of resources, do not always help pupils learn. This means that some pupils do not understand the key information they have been taught. They are unable to achieve in lessons and develop gaps in their core knowledge.

Some teachers use questions to identify what pupils know. However, often, questions are vague and general. They are not focused enough to pinpoint specific gaps or misconceptions. Responses from one or two pupils are incorrectly used to determine that everyone is ready to move on. In these situations, pupils struggle to complete activities. They do not learn well.

Some teachers do not routinely check learning that pupils may have missed. This limits teachers' ability to address significant gaps in pupils' knowledge. As a result, some pupils struggle to learn new content. They cannot recall information over longer time periods. This makes it difficult for pupils to perform well in examinations and assessments.

Pupils with SEND are well supported. Their needs are accurately identified. Teaching is adapted to support pupils with SEND to access the same curriculum as their peers. However, as with the curriculum for others, there are inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum, which results in pupils not learning as well as they should.

The school has worked hard to ensure that expectations for behaviour are clear. Despite this, not all adults have defined to pupils how they should meet these standards. As a result, at times, pupils' behaviour falls below what is expected. For example, they display boisterous behaviour in social spaces and use inappropriate language. Some adults do not apply the policies consistently. As a result, when some pupils misbehave, this is not dealt with quickly. This causes learning to be disrupted in some lessons.

The school has designed a comprehensive programme of life skills. Pupils are taught about the importance of respect and tolerance. They explore the importance of healthy relationships. However, teaching is inconsistent. This means pupils do not fully understand these issues. The school's careers programme is being developed. Pupils access some of their entitlement, but this is at times ad-hoc and not well planned.

School and trust leaders have a clear and realistic picture of the school and its provision. There are well-thought-out plans to tackle the priorities of the school. Where additional capacity has been added, it is making the school better. The board of trustees works with the executive team to maintain a detailed overview of actions and their impact on the school's provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all teaching is precise enough to support pupils effectively, including those pupils with SEND, to learn the intended key information set out in curriculum plans, including the key knowledge about fostering positive relationships. This means that pupils do not understand what they have been taught. The school should ensure that teachers are supported and equipped to choose the most

appropriate pedagogical strategies to ensure that all pupils are consistently provided with the key knowledge needed to progress.

- Teachers do not always use effective strategies to determine exactly what all pupils know and if they are ready to move on. At times, pupils have not fully understood what has been taught. This is not addressed, and pupils are unable to complete learning activities to the depth required to secure the knowledge they have been taught. As a consequence, pupils do not learn well and cannot recall key information over time. The school should ensure that teachers routinely check all pupils' understanding of key knowledge and adapt their approaches to address gaps and misconceptions.
- Teachers do not always identify and focus clearly enough on the most significant gaps in pupils' knowledge. Consequently, pupils who are behind in their learning are not able to catch up as quickly as they should. The school must ensure that curriculum planning and teaching swiftly identify and address pupils' most significant gaps in knowledge.
- The school has not ensured that its behaviour policy is consistently applied. The result of this is that the behaviour of some pupils interrupts the learning of others. Some pupils use language that is inappropriate in social spaces. The school should make sure that all staff implement the behaviour policy consistently and effectively.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	139272
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10268412
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,333
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	60
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Vic Daniels
Principal	Graham Horn
Website	www.neale-wade.org
Dates of previous inspection	2 and 3 November 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Neale-Wade Academy is part of The Active Learning Trust.
- The school uses one alternative provider. This provider is registered and inspected by Ofsted.
- The school does not currently meet the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the executive principal, principal, and special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with the representative of the board of trustees, the chair of the local governing committee and the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, art and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. A member of the inspection team also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To further inspect the curriculum, inspectors visited lessons in other subjects, tutor times and reviewed documentation setting out support for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors reviewed the 133 responses and 129 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke with several staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Emma Matthews	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Tom Sparks	Ofsted Inspector
Wayne Jarvis	Ofsted Inspector

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