

Inspection of Felixstowe School

High Street, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9QR

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Emma Wilson-Downes. This school is part of Unity Schools Partnership Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Tim Coulson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Christine Quinn. There is also an executive headteacher, Kevin Blakey.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are benefiting from being part of this improving school. The school has high aspirations for its pupils and they are cared for by the staff. This means that most pupils are happy and feel safe in this school.

Although pupils have not achieved as highly as they could have done in the past, they are now making good progress in most subjects. There is a new, ambitious curriculum in many subjects. Pupils now enjoy more challenging lessons with teachers who better support them to learn more.

Leaders have raised standards for pupils' behaviour and conduct. This means that pupils are now able to learn without disruption in their lessons. Most pupils are keen to learn and try their very hardest in lessons. Pupils receive guidance that raises their expectations of what they can achieve in their future.

Pupils can take part in a wide variety of opportunities, including robot construction and podcasting clubs. They can also take part in the orchestra or a range of sporting activities. Pupils learn about why respect for difference and tolerance are important. This means that they benefit from a wide variety of experiences that build their understanding of the world.

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

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is now more challenging so that pupils can achieve better. Pupils study a range of subjects. More pupils are taking and passing GCSEs in the group of academic subjects that comprise the English Baccalaureate. This means that they are well placed for a range of future study or career options.

In many subjects, teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. They provide clear explanations and regularly check on what pupils know. In a few subjects, teaching is not as consistently effective. This is because of temporary staffing arrangements or where teachers need to develop their practice further. Where this is the case, leaders give the guidance and support that those teachers need to improve. The quality of education is improving. Pupils now make better progress in most subjects but the school recognises that there remains more to do to ensure this is consistently the case.

Sixth-form students benefit from teachers with strong subject knowledge and teaching that is focused on individual needs. This means students are making better progress than they have done in the past. The behaviour and attitudes of sixth-form students are consistently positive. Students are highly supportive of each other.

The curriculum is adapted well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school takes great care to ensure that a small number of pupils are provided with relevant alternative learning placements that suit their needs better.

The school has focused on improving pupils' reading. Those who struggle to read are provided with support to help them improve. For a small number of the weakest readers, the school does not give precise enough support, so they do not make improvements in their reading fluency. This means that these pupils are not able to make the progress that they should.

The school has increased the expectations of pupils' behaviour both in lessons and around the school. In most lessons now, the pupils listen carefully and are ready to learn. However, the attendance of some pupils is too low. This affects the progress that these pupils make. The school is taking effective action to reduce the levels of absence but there is still more to do to ensure that all pupils attend school as often as possible.

There is a well-planned programme for personal, social, health and economic education. Pupils learn about the world around them and how to make a positive contribution to society. There is strong guidance around careers throughout the school. In the sixth form, leaders have carefully considered how to raise aspirations by providing students with bespoke support that develops their understanding of how to achieve their goals. As a result, many more students are now going on to study at some of the most academic universities.

The trust provides highly effective support to the school. The trust has strengthened leadership, which has helped accelerate the pace of improvement. School leaders consider the well-being of their staff carefully when making decisions. This means that more teachers are choosing to remain at the school, and pupils benefit from their teaching.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. This means that these pupils are not achieving as highly as they could because they miss out on learning. The school needs to continue its work to identify and address the barriers that prevent some pupils from attending regularly so that persistent absence reduces further.
- Some teachers do not consistently implement the curriculum as the school intends. As a result, in these subjects, pupils do not secure important knowledge as well as they do elsewhere. The school should ensure that the curriculum is taught consistently well in all subjects.
- Support for the weakest readers is not always closely matched to what they need to learn. As a result, a small number of pupils do not learn to read well. The

school should ensure that all pupils get the right help to improve their reading skills.

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	137321
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10318608
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,241
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	89
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christine Quinn
CEO of the trust	Tim Coulson
Headteacher	Emma Wilson-Downes
Website	www.fxa.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 October 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school makes use of alternative provision. The school uses nine alternative provisions. Five of these are unregistered provisions and four are registered with Ofsted.
- The school meets 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.
- To discuss governance, an inspector met with one trustee. An inspector also met separately with two members of the local governing board.
- An inspector met with the CEO and the trust executive director of secondary education to discuss the role of the trust.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead, the head of sixth form, behaviour and personal development leads, school subject leaders and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, languages, geography, drama and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors spent time in the sixth form on both days of the inspection and held meetings with sixth-form students.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects, including religious education, history and design technology.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times. Inspectors reviewed information and records of pupils’ behaviour.
- 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. Inspectors also held a dedicated meeting to explore attendance and the use of alternative provision.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey and Ofsted’s staff survey. They considered the responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text messages.

Inspection team

Andrew Robinson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Russell Ayling	Ofsted Inspector
David Piercy	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Warburton	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Fowler	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024