

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Fakenham Academy

Field Lane, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 9QT

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 October 2024

Outcome

Fakenham Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Gavin Green. This school is part of Sapiientia Education 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), Jonathan Taylor, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter Rout.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Fakenham Academy learn the importance of being kind, ambitious and determined. They value that staff will go the extra mile to support them when life throws up challenges. Pupils are motivated by the fact they are rewarded when they do well. This includes trips, prizes and the gold, silver and bronze badges they take great pride in wearing. Pupils feel happy and safe, as the school shows care in all that it does.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils appreciate how staff get to know them and make changes to lessons to suit their individual needs. Pupils especially like the 'take 5' activities that help teachers pinpoint where pupils need more support. All of this ensures that pupils achieve increasingly well.

New starters quickly settle in and make friends, as the school is a pleasant place to be. Pupils treat each other with respect. They know and follow the clearly defined behaviour rules.

Pupils feel a real sense of community. As sixth-form students put it, 'The school is small enough to care but big enough to do things.' This is reflected in the wealth of trips and community events the school engages with.

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

The trust has worked with the school to completely redevelop the curriculum. It is now broad, ambitious and of high quality. For example, the teaching of languages has been strengthened. This has significantly increased the number of pupils accessing the full range of English Baccalaureate subjects. In the sixth form, the school provides a mix of academic and vocational courses. These are well matched to students' future ambitions and there is plenty of support on offer to help them deepen their knowledge and achieve well.

The trust has significantly invested in staffing. Pupils are taught by knowledgeable teachers who receive high-quality training. Staff share best practices across the trust. For example, this is where the successful 'take 5' activity originated. All this has ensured that, overall, pupils' achievements in national examinations are improving. Pupils more effectively remember important knowledge across many of the subjects they study. However, in some areas of the wider curriculum, achievement has not increased as much. Pupils do not remember knowledge as well. This is because some staff training in developing subject teaching is relatively recent, so it has not had time to secure improvements.

The school has introduced consistent and clear expectations for high-quality teaching. These are well understood. For example, lessons have consistent structures. This helps pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to produce high-quality work because they know what to expect. Staff use the information they have about pupils with SEND carefully to make changes to their lessons. They break down explanations and provide additional examples if needed. This supports pupils with SEND to learn new knowledge well.

The school accurately identifies where pupils have barriers to reading. It puts in place well-matched programmes of support to help pupils catch up.

Staff get to know pupils well. They make careful checks on pupils' learning and provide extra support where needed. In the sixth form, this is especially evident. Staff further support students with important skills such as independent study. As a result, most students produce high-quality notes and secure complex subject knowledge well.

Pupils behave and attend well. They follow the school's clearly defined expectations. The school provides extensive support for any wider issues that pupils have. For example, those who need it get support to manage their emotions in 'The Nest'. All of this contributes to the calm and focused atmosphere at the school.

Pupils are very well prepared for life beyond school. Sixth-form students get practical guidance, such as cooking on a budget, and all pupils get lots of useful careers guidance. This helps pupils make highly informed choices about their next steps. The school provides an extensive range of wider opportunities that help pupils to develop their character. For example, pupils take part in community events, such as raft building, and

support local charity work through the 'dementia café'. The school offers clubs to suit almost every interest and a wealth of sporting fixtures.

The trust has taken effective action to raise standards. This includes improving the site, facilities and quality of teaching. This has been done in a way that has maintained strong relationships and has taken staff, pupils and parents, as well as with the school and trust. The school has successfully established a caring culture. This culture has enabled staff to feel positive about how the school considers workload and well-being in all that it does.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some of the work the school has done to develop the quality of the wider curriculum and how well it is taught is relatively recent. There is still a minority of subjects where pupils do not achieve as well as they should because they do not retain important knowledge well enough. The school needs to ensure that it fully embeds the work done to develop the wider curriculum and how well it is taught, so that pupils achieve consistently well across the range of subjects taught.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in June 2015.

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 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	139572
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10345368
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	743
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	105
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Rout
CEO of the trust	Jonathan Taylor
Headteacher	Gavin Green
Website	www.fakenhamacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school became part of the Sapientia Education Trust in January 2020. This was a sponsor-led arrangement.
- The headteacher took up post in January 2022, having previously been deputy headteacher and acting headteacher at the school.
- 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the trust chief executive officer, deputy chief executive officer, trust executive headteacher, headteacher, deputy headteacher, special education needs coordinator head of sixth form, middle leaders and class teachers across the inspection.
- Inspectors focused inspection activity on the following groups of subjects: English, mathematics and science; and music and languages. For each group of subjects, inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 met with the chair of trustees, and two other trustees, regarding governance.
- Inspectors visited breaktimes, lunchtimes and assemblies and met with groups of pupils and spoke to pupils around the school site.
- Inspectors conducted further meetings on safeguarding, personal development and behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey. They considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text messages.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rowena Simmons

Ofsted Inspector

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