

Neale-Wade Academy

Wimblington Road, March, PE15 9PX

Inspection dates 3–4 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management	Good		2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Requires improvement		3
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement		3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement		3
Sixth form provision	Good		2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across all teachers and subjects.
- Attainment does not reach national standards across the full range of GCSEs taken by students.
- GCSE results are not high enough in French, history and information technology.
- Disadvantaged students are not catching up fast enough with other students nationally or in the academy.
- Students who enter the academy with above-average attainment, have not made as much progress as other students. Not enough students have achieved the higher GCSE grades.
- Students and parents are clear that there is too much low-level disruption, albeit in a small number of lessons.
- Behaviour is not always managed effectively in lessons. Teachers are inconsistent in the way they apply the academy's behaviour code.
- Marking is too variable, with not enough detailed feedback in some subjects. Students do not consistently respond to the guidance given them to improve their work.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal has driven rapid improvements since the academy opened. The academy is a cohesive community.
- Students say they feel safe in the academy.
- The curriculum has been broadened for GCSE examinations and in the sixth form. Opportunities for students to express their views and develop wider skills in leadership are strong.
- The new 'mastery' curriculum and rigorous assessment processes are rapidly improving the progress students make in all year groups.
- Teaching in mathematics and science is increasingly competent. A particular strength is the consistency and impact of good teaching in English.
- Leadership of the academy is good and governors are effective. The Trust is providing practical support to improve students' attendance and behaviour.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out without notice. Ofsted’s Regional Director made this decision on behalf of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector because of concerns about the academy expressed by parents, including about students’ behaviour.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the academy’s documents on safeguarding, the academy’s view of its own performance and plans for future improvement. They also looked at the academy’s information about how well students are doing and its records relating to teaching, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors observed learning in 35 lessons and visited an assembly and tutor periods. Four lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders from the academy. On the first morning of the inspection, the inspectors made brief visits to 57 lessons for students in Years 7 to 11.
- Inspectors spoke with students in lessons and looked at their books. They observed and talked with students at breaks and lunchtimes and as they moved around the academy. Discussions were held with three members of the Parents’ Forum, three governors, a representative of the Active Learning Trust as well as senior and subject leaders.
- Discussions were held with four groups of students about how well they are doing in different subjects and to gather their views on behaviour and safety in the academy.
- Inspectors considered the 59 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, that had been received by the end of the school day on the second day of the inspection, as well as a further 11 responses that were made later that evening. In addition, nine parents submitted written responses. Responses to other parental surveys carried out by the academy were also considered.
- Responses were also considered from 48 staff who completed an inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Anne Pepper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Frederick Valletta	Additional Inspector
Michael Stanton	Additional Inspector
Russell Ayling	Additional Inspector
Christine Mayle	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Neale-Wade Academy opened in April 2013 and is sponsored by the Active Learning Trust. The Trust currently has a local Cambridgeshire hub of 12 academies, of which only Neale-Wade provides secondary education.
- Almost all students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- At 22%, the proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- At 29%, the proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium is average. This additional funding is given to schools for students who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A small number of students attend Red Balloon of the Air to support their medical needs.
- Eight students are educated partly off-site at the College of West Anglia and a small number of students are educated wholly off-site in alternative provision called the Fenland Learning Base.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good and raise standards in GCSE examinations by:
 - ensuring that teachers mark students' work more consistently, that students take pride in their presentation and consistently respond to the assessment and 'even better if' targets set by teachers
 - improving questioning to ensure that students deepen their understanding, knowledge and skills
 - focusing even more closely on supporting those students who are disadvantaged.
- Reduce the incidents of low-level disruption of learning by:
 - ensuring consistent use of the academy's behaviour consequences system by all teachers and in all subjects
 - swiftly dealing with the concerns expressed by students and their parents about behaviour.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal has the full commitment of staff, parents and governors in his relentless drive to improve the outcomes for students. Written comments from a member of staff provide an accurate summary, 'The Principal has worked so hard to turn this school around. We are not the finished article yet but are improving greatly'.
- There have been rapid improvements across a range of areas; GCSE and A level results have improved, teaching has improved, behaviour and attendance are improving. However, there are inconsistencies in each aspect that mean that they are not yet good.
- The academy has fully implemented its approach to new assessment arrangements in Years 7 to 11. These were introduced in September 2014 and the academy's data and inspection evidence shows they are having a rapid impact on accelerating the progress students make in all their subjects. The impact is strongest in English, mathematics and science, where these subject leaders were the first to implement the changes.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The curriculum has been broadened at Key stage 4 and post-16 so that, as well as the more academic GCSE and A-level subjects, there is now a range of high-quality applied learning courses. Students receive effective guidance to choose an appropriate range of courses to meet their interests and aspirations.
- Active learning and a 'can-do' attitude are at the heart of the academy's ethos for both students and staff. The systems needed to bring about improvements are in place. Leaders of English, mathematics and science, together with senior leaders, are now working with other subject leaders to improve their skills and reduce the inconsistencies that still exist in teaching and behaviour across a wider range of subjects.
- Leadership of teaching is good with an effective professional development programme and small group programmes. Monitoring of teaching is accurate and takes into account, the progress made by students over time, the quality of their written work and their responses in lessons. As a result, teaching has improved rapidly since the academy opened.
- The performance of teachers is managed competently, with robust challenge where needed, together with programmes of support for any underperformance. As a result, teachers are clear on their strengths and their areas for improvement.
- The changes made to introduce a 'mastery' curriculum in Years 7 to 11 together with new approaches to tracking students' progress are highly effective and a strength of the academy. The academy is providing high-quality training to other schools. The academy has strong capacity to improve as shown by its training for other schools as well as internal programmes. These internal programmes to improve teaching and behaviour are proving to be effective, but it is too early to see their full impact.
- The academy has received practical support from the Trust to help improve attendance and behaviour including the recent training of students as 'Class Reporters' to give feedback to teachers. Attendance and behaviour have improved, although the use of Class Reporters is at a very early stage. The Trust has worked with Neale-Wade and an academy in London to enable students to experience the differences in rural and city communities.
- The many opportunities for other activities, such as leadership, sport and performance, are highly valued by students. The advice and careers guidance that students receive ensures they choose appropriate pathways both at GCSE and post-16. These include other school sixth forms, sixth form college and further education as well as work with training.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the academy. For example, in a biology lesson, students looked at different views and beliefs about organ transplant, as well as the social and community aspects of organ donation. A student parliament is planning a mock general election linked

to the Westminster election later this year. In all of this, the academy promotes equality of opportunity, tackles discrimination and prepares students well for life in modern Britain.

- The academy meets the requirements for safeguarding. Staff and visitors are appropriately vetted and this ensures students are safe. Leaders check on the attendance and progress of the small number of students who attend off-site provision.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is effective and has a secure understanding of its role in setting the direction of the academy, in its monitoring of finances and ensuring statutory duties are met and in challenge to the Principal.
- The Trust has been effective in training and strengthening the skills of the governors. Governors comment on the impact of the rapid improvements they have seen over the past two years. Further training is in place for governors to extend their understanding of data.
- The pupil premium is used well. Its allocation is planned and its impact evaluated. Governors have a clear understanding of how it is spent. Governors know how gaps are closing between disadvantaged students and others in the school, but not compared to other students nationally.
- Governors understand and check on the processes to measure teachers' performance and to reward good teaching. They have worked with the Principal to tackle any serious underperformance by teachers. They have worked to strengthen the sanctions for poor behaviour by students and rewards for good behaviour. They have also checked on the impact of these by analysing the data provided by the academy.
- The governing body has not sought to clarify or respond fully to the views expressed by students and parents who are concerned about disruptive behaviour and weaknesses in teaching. These views confirmed what inspectors saw during the inspection from a small number of students and teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- Students told inspectors that sometimes a small minority of their peers who do not want to learn disrupts their learning. This mainly happens when teaching is weak and particularly in French, history and information technology. This was confirmed by what inspectors saw when visiting a wide range of lessons during the morning of the first day of the inspection.
- Students, staff and parents all agree that behaviour in the academy has rapidly improved following the appointment of the current principal. Conduct around the academy between lessons and outside the academy is good. Most students manage their own behaviour with only minor supervision by staff. Students respond quickly to the instructions given on the very few occasions they are needed; for example when it snowed on the first day of the inspection.
- There have been no permanent exclusions since the academy opened. Fixed term exclusions have fallen rapidly and are below national figures. This is as a result of the robust systems in place to support teachers with a highly effective system of behaviour consequences, internal seclusion and programmes such as restorative justice. However, students reported that not all teachers use the consequences system consistently.
- The reward system is having a positive impact for the vast majority of students. Senior leaders briefly visit lessons and award stars to students on the recommendation of the teacher. The student council said they would like more of this, as well as more use of positive telephone or text messages to home. Students are pleased that academy leaders have responded and done this.
- Attendance has improved since the academy opened and has been in line with national figures for the past two years. Punctuality to school and to lessons has also improved and there are few incidences of lateness. The Trust's Head of Professional Development has provided effective support in this area, with clear evidence of impact. Persistent absence has reduced, but is not yet as low as the national figures.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students know how to keep themselves safe

and can express their views and understanding clearly. Students have a strong understanding of the different types of bullying. They say that should they feel concerned or unsafe, they know who to go to and are sure of an appropriate response. Assemblies are held on safety including e-safety, child exploitation and other potential risks. These assemblies are repeated for parents in evening sessions.

- Systems for files and referrals concerning students who might face problems are strong. Case studies show good evidence of the tracking put in place for these students. Referrals are reported confidentially to governors. All training is in place and up to date and good records kept. Records of bullying and racist incidents are kept and followed up.
- The academy has effective systems for ensuring students' safety. Parents expressed positive opinions on Parent View about safety. They feel their children are cared for well and that staff respond promptly to reconcile and minimise any instances of bullying in its various forms.
- The arrangement for transition from primary to secondary is a strength of the academy. Students know what to expect. They visit with their Year 6 teachers and are taught by them in the academy building. As a result they feel at ease and are confident about moving up. Year 7 students commented that having a separate area in the playground also helps them to feel confident and safe.
- Leaders check on the attendance, behaviour, safety and progress of the small numbers of students who attend off-site and alternative provision. As a result, they make good progress and move on to positive destinations in the next stage of their education, employment or training.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality and impact of teaching varies too much between subjects. It is particularly weak in French, history and information technology. The academy is aware of this. There are plans in place to bring about improvements. However, these plans have not yet been implemented over a full year and are not yet showing an impact on students' progress over time.
- Teaching over time for the most-able students has not resulted in the same rapid improvement in progress seen for some other groups of students. In mathematics, not enough students moved from a Level 5 on entry to the academy, to a grade B, A or A* at GCSE. The academy's records, data and inspection evidence shows this is much better for current students, but it has not had enough time to impact fully on the standards in GCSE examinations.
- The focus on the learning needs of disadvantaged students has not been fully effective in helping them to catch up with students from other groups. While the progress of some is improving many continue to lag behind their peers in terms of standards and the progress they make.
- Marking of work is too variable. The work in a number of students' books is unmarked by teachers or students. As a result, not all students take sufficient pride in their work. For some the presentation of their work is untidy. Some teachers do not check that students have followed up on the targets they have set for them.
- Other aspects of assessment are strong. The academy uses a range of assessment approaches, including diagnostic testing and re-testing. There is clear feedback from these tests that show students what they have improved on and what they need to do to improve further. Students know their targets and current grade and how to improve their work. However, not all students respond to these targets.
- Teaching is good overall in English. In a lesson on explaining events in poetry, the teacher engaged and challenged students by using contemporary music and lyrics to illustrate different aspects of poetry. Effective use was made of students' prior learning to build up their knowledge and skills.
- Teaching in mathematics and science has rapidly improved. There is a core of outstanding teaching in mathematics, of which the academy is rightly proud, and is beginning to share with other schools. The academy has good capacity to improve teaching rapidly using its highly effective professional development programme.

- Students have responded well to the new 'mastery' curriculum since it was introduced in September 2014. The highly structured approach has improved students' sense of achievement and they can see themselves getting better. A system of 'speaking tests' means that all students are developing strong skills in communication, literacy, reading and mathematics. This approach has particularly benefited lower-attaining students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Many of these students are making rapid progress.
- Good questioning is seen in some lessons. For example, in a mathematics lesson on trigonometry, students had to recall the steps to take by 'telling the story' of the question. This was repeated with harder questions with more decisions to be made. It became clear that students could not only recall the steps, but really understood why it worked, and what might go wrong. When questioning is less strong, it focuses too heavily on short, recall of facts or steps and does not allow students' to also demonstrate their understanding.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join the academy in Year 7 with attainment below national standards. In 2014, standards at the end of Key Stage 4 across students' best eight GCSE subjects were below those of other students nationally. This is because students do not do well enough across the full range of GCSE subjects, particularly French, history and information technology.
- Compared with national standards for GCSE at A* to C in 2013 and 2014, the academy improved in English language, mathematics and science but declined considerably in English literature, French and history. The academy's data for students in the current Year 11 show that these students have made faster progress since September 2014, but it is too early to see the full impact of this better progress in their final results.
- The proportion of most-able students gaining the higher GCSE grades of A* and A, is broadly in line with the national figures in most subjects, including English language and most science courses. However, standards are below average in mathematics, French and history. The academy's data shows a rapidly improving picture for current students in Years 7 to 11, but again it is too early to see the full impact of this on their final results.
- In 2014, almost all students entered GCSE mathematics early. While students achieved broadly in line with expectations at grades A* to C, not enough students gained grade B and above. A few students were happy with a grade C and did not take the opportunity to gain a higher grade, of which some were capable. As a result, this policy of early entry for mathematics has been stopped.
- The gap between disadvantaged students in the academy and other students nationally, is too wide and is not closing fast enough. In English, disadvantaged students in the academy are two thirds of a grade below other students nationally and the gap widened in 2014. In mathematics, disadvantaged students in the academy are over a grade below other students nationally and the gap widened in 2014.
- In both English and mathematics, disadvantaged students in the academy are two-thirds of a grade below other students in the academy. The gap stayed the same in English and closed in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged students showed improved results in 2014 as a result of making better progress in mathematics, and especially in English, than similar students in 2013. The academy's data also shows an improving picture in Years 7 to 11.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with other students in the academy. Specific support from specialist teachers and teaching assistants is planned well and is effective, but the overall impact varies because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in lessons.
- The small number of students who attend off-site provision, either full-time or part-time, and those with medical needs make good progress as a result of the careful attention to their needs. As a result, these

students are well prepared for the next stage in their education, employment and training.

The sixth form provision

is good

- About a third of students from Year 11 stay on to the academy's sixth form. As a result of high-quality information and advice, including examples of successful former students, current students are encouraged to choose from a wide variety of educational destinations and pathways. As a result, all students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- The pass rate at A level rose in 2014 to 97% and the proportion of students gaining the higher grades of A* to B also rose considerably to 49%. This means that half of students are gaining these higher grades, well above national figures. Students taking work-related qualifications made good progress achieving a 'distinction plus' on average in 2014.
- Results at the end of Year 12 are not as good and fell slightly in 2014. The retention from Year 12 to Year 13 is in line with the national figures, with a number of students who only plan to complete Year 12. Careful tracking of the students who leave at the end of Year 12 shows almost every student moved on to employment, training or other education.
- Students who do not have a GCSE grade C in English or mathematics all take a GCSE course in that subject and the pass rates are very high, well above the pass rates nationally. All groups of students make the same good progress, including disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good, as shown by the good outcomes across most subjects. Teaching is better in Year 13 than in Year 12 and, as a result, students have a clearer understanding of examination requirements and how well they are doing compared to their targets. Tracking systems now mirror those in the main part of the academy, with consistent use of agreed target grades and clear feedback to students about their progress towards these targets. Targets are renegotiated and raised if a student is already meeting them, and extra support is now starting much earlier in Year 12 if a student is falling behind.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. A recent academy-led review of the sixth form produced an accurate report that identified clearly the strengths and areas for improvement. Improvements have been made to the curriculum since the academy opened. The new head of sixth form, who took up post in September 2014, has accelerated this change with a stronger mix of both academic A levels and other course choices. These include applied A levels and courses more suitable for those who plan a one year course in Year 12 to retake English or mathematics and prepare for employment with training or a college place.
- Attendance and punctuality have improved as a result of careful tracking. Attendance is now about 94%, up from 80%, but the sixth form leaders are aware that this is still not high enough. Rewards, such as a free lunch pass for a week for student of the month, are motivating students. The student of the month was also chosen to meet Princess Anne on her recent visit to the academy.
- Students have many opportunities for personal development and to take on leadership opportunities. This year, the roles of a head boy and head girl have been introduced. Students are reading mentors to the younger students and mentor Year 11 students who might be experiencing difficulties and may want an older 'brother or sister' point of view.
- Students take part in a wide range of other activities organising social and charity events in the academy. Social events entirely planned and organised by the students include a talent show, a quiz and a Valentine's Day disco. Charity events include the British Heart Foundation 'Wear it red' day.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139272
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	449827

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1448
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Pugh
Principal	Jason Wing
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01354 606000
Fax number	01354 652407
Email address	office@neale-wade.org

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