

Newmarket Academy

Exning Road, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 0EB

Inspection dates

18–19 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, with support from senior and middle leaders, provides strong strategic direction and leadership. Leaders continually identify and improve any areas of relative weakness.
- Governors and leaders of the trust share the headteacher's vision to ensure that pupils get the best deal possible. They challenge and support leaders effectively to drive the shared vision.
- Detailed checks on the school's work mean that senior and middle leaders as well as governors have a clear understanding of what is working well and what needs to be better.
- In 2016, pupils' progress in English and mathematics matched that seen nationally. This year, pupils are making strong progress in these and other key subjects.
- Many pupils join the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders' work to address this are beginning to have a positive impact.
- The school has developed strong ties with local organisations and this, along with other initiatives, is raising pupils' aspirations and broadening their horizons.
- Attendance for the majority is above the national average; pupils say they enjoy coming to school and that the staff care about them.
- Newer middle leaders have strengthened the capacity of the school to improve further. Those who are less experienced have appreciated the support and expertise that the trust has provided.
- Pupils are very polite and friendly, and welcome visitors to their school. They move safely around the school and treat each other and adults with respect. They report that they feel safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe.
- While teachers plan work that is mostly well matched to the ability of pupils, there are occasions where the most able pupils are not challenged to achieve as well as they could.
- Pupils across the school, including the sixth form, now receive clear guidance on careers and next steps. This enables them to move on to their chosen destinations confidently.
- Leaders', including governors', evaluation of pupil premium spending is effective. They identify that closer scrutiny will ensure that the impact on pupils' progress can be even better.
- Although progress in the sixth form is broadly in line with national averages, leaders have not ensured that the entry criteria were rigorous enough for the courses they offered.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the literacy skills of pupils in the school by:
 - identifying pupils who need the most support rigorously
 - fully evaluating the current strategies to improve literacy to see which are the most effective
 - developing all teachers' expertise in supporting pupils with low levels of confidence in literacy.
- Increase pupils' rates of progress and improve outcomes by:
 - sharpening the evaluation of the impact of pupil premium spending to pinpoint the most effective strategies to benefit the largest number of pupils
 - ensuring that teachers plan activities that sufficiently challenge the most able pupils so they achieve as well as they should.
- Work closely with the remaining cohort of sixth-form students to ensure that they make good progress from their starting points.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has striven successfully to develop an atmosphere where staff and, increasingly, pupils have high expectations of themselves and each other. Governors, senior leaders, a developing team of middle leaders and the trust have supported this change in culture and ethos.
- Pupils recognise the transformation of the school and know that the changes are contributing to their improving progress and behaviour, and more positive attitudes to learning.
- The leadership and management of the school is now more collegiate and efficient, with leaders at all levels contributing to the school's improvement. The quality of middle leadership has been secured by collaboration with colleagues in other schools in the trust, a willingness to take advice and be accountable for the progress of the pupils in their care.
- Senior and middle leaders are actively involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and progress. They are supported in this by lead practitioners in a number of subjects who are sharing expertise both within and between departments.
- Staff morale is high. This is confirmed by the overwhelming response to the staff questionnaire, where typically staff say they are 'always helping each other and are supportive of each other'.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have already begun to re-evaluate the separate science entries to ensure that all pupils are taking the right science course for their ability and therefore able to achieve the results they need for the next stage of their education and training.
- Leaders review pupils' books and use regular assessment points to check how well pupils are doing. Timetabled progress meetings between leaders and staff are used effectively to identify pupils at risk of falling behind. Additional support is then provided to help the pupils catch up. The addition of an extra timetabled lesson, across the school, once a week has enabled this support to be targeted to meet the needs of the pupils successfully.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 provides a good balance of subjects to meet pupils' needs and interests. The addition of an extra timetabled lesson has given pupils the opportunity to broaden their horizons, raise their aspirations and increase their enjoyment of school. For example, a number of pupils have recently completed their Bronze Arts Award through Trinity College and been involved in Young Enterprise projects.
- Careers advice and guidance is a strength in the school. The high-quality advice helps pupils to understand why they need to work hard and do well. This is supported by a programme of trips, including to universities and cultural visits, and working in partnerships with local organisations.
- There is a work experience programme in Year 10 that gives all pupils relevant

opportunities to sample the world of work and think beyond their time in the school.

- The school uses tutor time, house meetings and regular assemblies to contribute to the pupils' understanding of British values and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural well-being.
- Leaders have recently begun to sharpen their monitoring and evaluation of pupil premium funding with the recent appointment of a new senior leader. Progress for disadvantaged pupils is improving and their attendance has improved. However, leaders acknowledge that more work needs to be done to evaluate specific impacts, for example in diminishing the difference between middle-ability disadvantaged pupils and their peers, and in continuing to lower the persistent absence rates.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used appropriately and the school engages well with external agencies and specialist services.
- The additional Year 7 catch-up funding for literacy and numeracy is used effectively to support pupils both in the classroom and in small intervention groups with specialist teaching assistants.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative providers for some sessions during the school week. Leaders regularly check pupils' safety, progress, attendance and behaviour.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- Governors have embraced their roles enthusiastically and are focused on driving continued improvements in the effectiveness of the school's work.
- Governors and leaders of the trust have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, including the spending of all additional funding. This is because they are frequent visitors to the school, are in regular contact with senior and middle leaders and receive detailed reports on all areas of the school's work. This enables them to challenge leaders and hold them to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are well trained, well informed and vigilant in identifying and reporting any concerns they might have to the designated safeguarding lead.
- Vetting checks on staff are comprehensive and are scrutinised regularly by senior leaders to ensure their accuracy.
- The designated safeguarding lead is well qualified and knowledgeable. She is supported in this role by heads of house who help to ensure that pupils have a detailed knowledge of the range of risks that might affect them.
- Pupils can talk in detail about how to identify signs of radicalisation, how to protect themselves from harm and how to stay safe online.
- Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for. They are clear about who they can go to if

there are incidents of bullying or they are made to feel uncomfortable by others. They are confident that if they speak to a member of staff they will be listened to and issues will be dealt with swiftly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Teachers know their pupils well and, in turn, pupils trust their teachers. Pupils support each other in lessons and they are keen to do well. They engage well with activities especially where teachers plan and provide tasks that meet pupils' individual learning needs well.
- Teaching in English and mathematics is effective. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and provide activities that support this.
- Most teachers use questioning skilfully to help pupils think about their learning and deepen their understanding. However, some teachers do not challenge the most able pupils as much as they could. This leads to some not making the progress they are capable of.
- Teachers generally follow the school's feedback and assessment policy closely. As a result, most teachers provide pupils with accurate feedback on the strengths of their work and clear areas for improvement. Almost all pupils make the necessary corrections to their work because of this feedback. Pupils are very clear about what they are expected to do when they are provided with feedback from their teachers.
- Typically, pupils come to lessons promptly and are ready to learn. Attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils are polite and friendly and were happy to discuss their work and their learning with inspectors.
- Pupils at risk of falling behind are identified quickly through regular assessment of their learning. Intervention activities and additional targeted work is then put in place. In one-to-one sessions or small group work, staff make sure that pupils think hard about what they are learning.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the assessment systems in each subject. This is supported by professional dialogue with colleagues in other trust schools. This has allowed staff to benefit from shared good practice and gain confidence in their own abilities.
- Continuous collaboration with colleagues in other trust schools happens at all levels. This enables the standardisation of tests and assessments, the moderation of feedback and a detailed analysis of pupils' performance.
- Teachers have gained a clear understanding of the changing demands of teaching the new GCSEs. This has led to increased confidence in the school's assessment information and subsequently more accurate identification of pupils' strengths and when to intervene if they are not making sufficient progress from their starting points.
- Teachers regularly provide extra materials and in-class support for disadvantaged pupils or those who find the subject difficult.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught well because teachers are aware of their learning needs. Teaching assistants are often well deployed and support pupils' learning sensitively and effectively. The special educational needs

coordinator and heads of house keep a close eye on how well pupils are doing and make sure teachers are responding to their needs.

- Teachers value the input from lead practitioners and other specialists as part of their continued professional development.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are well-mannered and very respectful towards each other, adults and visitors. They are smartly dressed and proud of their school.
- Younger pupils were keen to talk to inspectors about the opportunities the school offers. Older pupils were keen to talk about the changes that have happened, and particularly the approachability of senior leaders, teachers and other adults.
- Pupils say they are safe and well looked after in school. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe and about different types of bullying, through regular assemblies and house meetings. Pupils, of all ages, told inspectors that they were confident that staff would listen to them and resolve any concerns they might have. Parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that pupils are happy and safe.
- The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have access to a wide range of trips and visits; two key events for pupils this year were the school production of 'Honk' and a visit by the Duchess of Cornwall.
- Pupils have the opportunity to be student ambassadors. Student ambassadors have roles and responsibilities ranging from meeting and greeting at parents' evenings to leading activities in primary school. They also take part in subject reviews and lead assemblies and house meetings. There is also an elected school council.
- The school's care for pupils starts before they enter in Year 7. Leaders visit primary schools and learn about pupils' needs. They also talk to pupils and parents and deal well with concerns and worries that are raised.

Behaviour

- Leaders' raised expectations have ensured that behaviour is good and improving. However, some older pupils are taking time to meet the standard that is now required; as a result, they occasionally lack focus and therefore do not always try their best.
- Both in lessons and around the school, pupils behave in a mature and respectful way. Older pupils report how much the behaviour has improved since they first arrived in the school.
- Pupils are happy to come to school.
- Attendance rates are consistently higher than the national average. Leaders know the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities that are persistently absent is still high. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is beginning to improve. Leaders identify attendance as an area for improvement.

- The proportion of pupils who are temporarily excluded is reducing.
- Alternative provision in school is used to support pupils who are at risk of exclusion. Alternative provision, often work related, is offered to a small number of pupils; they attend for a small number of sessions during the week and spend most of their time in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work showed that, from their different starting points, pupils are making good progress across nearly all subjects, including English and mathematics. The school's records, supported by moderation, confirm this. Pupils are currently benefiting from stronger teaching than was the case previously.
- In 2016, by the end of key stage 4, pupils' progress was in line with others nationally in English and mathematics. However, a small cohort of disadvantaged middle-ability pupils made less progress than their peers. Support programmes put in place for the present Year 11 are leading to better progress for all pupils including the disadvantaged.
- In 2016, outcomes for the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, were broadly in line with national figures. The school's assessment information for all year groups shows improving progress for these cohorts of pupils. Leaders and teachers are ambitious for the pupils and identify that some could do even better.
- The focus on helping disadvantaged pupils reach their full potential was in place last year but it has now been intensified by the appointment of a new senior leader. Staff now know these pupils' learning needs well and give them the extra support they need.
- Strategies used to help disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as all other pupils nationally, using pupil premium funding, have been successful. For example, a breakfast club for Year 11 pupils has raised both attendance and attainment for this group. Consequently, the difference between disadvantaged pupils' attainment and other pupils nationally is diminishing.
- Strong pastoral care, targeted action and good support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are ensuring that they make at least similar progress to that of their peers from their starting points.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in lessons and in pupil meetings. The most able readers read with accuracy, fluency and expression. Where readers were less practised they found it difficult to decode unfamiliar words and lacked some of the key skills in phonics (letters and the sounds they represent). The school has introduced an accelerated reading scheme and pupils who had participated in this were more positive about their reading.
- Achievement in science for 2016 was poor especially for pupils entered for separate sciences. The school has made a number of improvements in the teaching and monitoring of science and has reassessed the entry criteria for separate sciences to ensure that pupils are entered for the most appropriate examinations.
- Leaders closely track pupils who leave the school after Year 11. This tracking shows that more than 99% of all pupils who left in 2016 went on to education or employment.

and training.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Despite the decision to close the sixth form, the school has made every effort to make sure that they meet the individual needs of all the students that have remained, even if this means very small classes.
- Prior to making the decision to close, the school did not apply rigorous enough entry criteria for the courses they offered. This meant that students were not always on the right course for either their ability or the next stage in their education or training. This has led to low retention rates.
- Outcomes for the sixth form in 2016 show that students generally made sufficient progress from their starting points. School assessment information for this year shows a similar pattern.
- Students are very positive about the post-16 study programme and the way in which teachers care about how well they achieve. They know that the school is diligent in tracking both their attendance and their achievement. They feel well looked after and they value the one-to-one mentoring that they receive.
- The school has an appropriate tutorial programme of information and guidance for students. There are several external events organised such as enterprise days, and visits including careers fairs and universities.
- All students now have a post-sixth form pathway with a third going on to university.
- Students' achievement is effectively tracked throughout the year and any underachievement is managed effectively with a variety of interventions and support programmes. Students say that teachers' feedback is always prompt and helpful. This contributes to students wanting to do their best.
- Some of the teaching and learning is strong, for example, students are given appropriate feedback that enables them to prepare for examinations.

School details

Unique reference number	140669
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10031348

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

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 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	606
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	17
Appropriate authority	The trust
Chair	Paul Reed
Headteacher	Nick Froy
Telephone number	01638 664412
Website	www.newmarketacademy.co.uk/
Email address	admin@newmarketacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school became part of the Samuel Ward Multi-Academy Trust in 2014.
- The school is a smaller than average-sized secondary school with a small sixth form.
- The sixth form was closed to new entrants last academic year due to lack of viability and there are currently only Year 13 students on roll, in the process of completing their

studies.

- Governors and school leaders are working closely with a number of partners to secure sixth-form places as part of a new tertiary college in Bury St Edmunds due to open in 2018.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is in line with national averages.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- In 2016, the school met the government's floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- A few pupils attend alternative provision for one day a week and attend Newmarket Academy for the bulk of their education. The additional providers are West Suffolk College and the British Racing School.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the school, in a broad range of subjects and across year groups. Inspectors visited a number of lessons jointly with senior leaders. They reviewed pupils' work and they heard several pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a representative from the trust and a group of governors.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils in lessons and around the school over the two days of the inspection. They also spoke formally to three groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 51 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the written text comments made by 35 parents. They also considered the school's recent parental surveys.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 58 staff who completed the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at the school's website and reviewed a range of documents. These included safeguarding documents, the school's written evaluation of its work and its improvement plans as well as information on attendance and behaviour. In addition, reports to the governing body, assessment information about last year's Year 11, outcomes and assessment information on the current progress and learning of groups of pupils across the school were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Vanessa Love, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Hutton	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Copping	Ofsted Inspector
Georgina Atkinson	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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