

The Open Academy

Salhouse Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR7 9DL

Inspection dates

6–7 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders', governors' and trustees' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is not as accurate as it should be. They think the school is better than it is.
- Leaders and teachers are not sufficiently focused on monitoring and advancing the progress that pupils make from their starting points. Despite recent improvements, pupils' progress remains below the national average. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not typically make good progress.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough. They do not typically challenge pupils to achieve their best.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not good. Too many put in less effort than they should. Rates of absence over time are above the national average.
- While pupils are generally polite and considerate, there are more instances of inappropriate behaviour than there should be.
- Outcomes in the sixth form are beginning to improve, but students still do not typically make as much progress as they should.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have designed the curriculum effectively to provide pupils with a breadth of knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is well developed by leaders. Being different in this school is fine.
- The independent advice and guidance leaders provide works well. The proportion of pupils remaining in education or moving into employment or training has risen markedly.
- Leaders have secured high staff morale. Staff feel well supported by leaders and enjoy working at the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders across the school, including governors and trustees, have a clear understanding of the progress that pupils make from their starting points
 - making sure that senior and middle leaders evaluate the impact of their work precisely and accurately
 - ensuring that those responsible for governance have a realistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision and are effective in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.
- Improve pupils' personal development and behaviour by:
 - raising teachers' and pupils' expectations of how much effort and care pupils need to put into their work
 - reducing incidents of unacceptable behaviour so that they no longer happen
 - improving rates of attendance so that persistent absence and overall attendance are at least in line with national averages.
- Improve the progress pupils make, including those in the sixth form, by:
 - making sure that teachers consistently take pupils' starting points into account when deciding on the work they should do
 - raising teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities
 - analysing and reviewing the impact of additional funding for groups of pupils and making better use of that funding so that those pupils' progress is maximised.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders' assessment of pupils' outcomes is overly generous. They do not pay enough attention to pupils' starting points or to what pupils can achieve. Leaders across the school lack a secure awareness of the progress pupils are making currently. While leaders' actions have led to better attainment for pupils, pupils' progress remains below the national average.
- Leaders' use of the additional funding they receive for groups of pupils is not as effective as it should be. Their evaluation of the impact of funding is imprecise. They are unclear about which strategies work well and which do not. While there has been some improvement in the progress that disadvantaged pupils make, these pupils continue to make less progress than other pupils nationally. Pupils who join the school with low starting points in English and mathematics make inconsistent progress. While some catch up, others do not. Pupils with SEND make less progress than they should.
- Leaders are not accurate in evaluating their work to improve pupils' behaviour and attendance. Attendance and behaviour are better than they were, but these aspects of the school are not as good as leaders think. Leaders could not account for trends in the number of pupils being removed from lessons and were not aware of patterns in the records of incidents of poor behaviour.
- Leaders make good use of the opportunities presented by the Norwich Opportunities Area to improve behaviour in the school. They now work closely with other schools in the locality to support pupils who present particularly challenging behaviour. As a result, the behaviour of some of these pupils has improved and there has recently been a reduction in the number of pupils excluded from the school.
- Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is developed well by leaders. Inspectors saw an effective assembly about the significance of Remembrance Day. All subject areas contribute to pupils' understanding of the world around them and this is underpinned by a rich range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils spoke positively to inspectors about the activities they undertake in tutor group time, such as news quizzes. They told inspectors that being different is fine and demonstrated a secure understanding of the need to treat those with different cultures and lifestyles to their own with respect.
- The support that leaders provide has a positive impact on the well-being of staff. Adults new to teaching were complimentary about the help they get. They told inspectors about the constructive support they receive from their mentors and the opportunities they have to share best practice. Almost all staff who responded to Ofsted's survey of their views said that they feel well supported and that leaders do all they can to ensure that they are motivated and respected. Almost all said that they enjoy working at the school.
- Leaders choose the subjects pupils can study well. They have based the curriculum design on their analysis of how appropriately the courses match the needs of different pupils in the school. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of subjects which provide them with a breadth of understanding. Leaders give pupils helpful advice

and guidance which help them to choose the right programmes of study. As a result, the proportion of pupils changing courses once they have begun has been reduced and the proportion who remain in education or move into employment or training after compulsory schooling is high.

Governance of the school

- Governors' and trustees' understanding of the effectiveness of the school reflects that of leaders. As such, it is not accurate. Governors and trustees think that the standard of education provided by the school is better than it is. They have not done enough to validate the information they receive from leaders.
- Along with senior leaders, governors and trustees place too much emphasis on the attainment of pupils. They do not give enough consideration to whether pupils have made sufficient progress from their starting points.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders maintain clear and effective records of safeguarding incidents. They follow up concerns in a timely fashion and involve other agencies as appropriate. Staff training is kept up to date and leaders ensure that their own awareness of developments in safeguarding practice is current. Staff know what to do if they have a concern and any that they do report are recorded and acted on swiftly.
- Pupils are taught to keep safe. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, assemblies and visiting speakers cover things such as 'county lines', staying safe online, healthy lifestyles and road safety. Staff remind pupils regularly in assemblies who they can talk to if they are worried about something. Pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that they know who to speak with and that they feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations of pupils' efforts are not typically high enough. Too many teachers accept poorly presented work and pupils not working hard.
- Teachers' questioning is too often closed. Teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to think about what they are learning.
- Teachers do not pay close attention to pupils' starting points when determining the work pupils do. Inspectors saw, for example, some pupils trying to mark each other's work using a marksheet they did not understand, and others completing a worksheet which was too easy for them. While the work does help pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding, it does not provide sufficient challenge for pupils to do as well as they could.
- Inspectors observed more effective work in the specialist resourced provision. Adults tailor the work they set to meet the needs of pupils well.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good. They use this well to ensure that the content that pupils learn about is appropriate and contributes to the progress they make.

- Routines are generally understood and used well. Pupils know what is expected of them in lessons and comply with this. They arrive in an orderly fashion and follow the guidance that teachers give.
- Teachers largely establish positive relationships with pupils. Pupils are typically responsive to teachers' requests and are polite.
- Some teaching is strong. Inspectors saw some highly effective questioning used to draw out and develop pupils' understanding of complex ideas. They witnessed some pupils working very hard and with enthusiasm.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Many pupils lack understanding of how to be successful learners. When speaking in front of or with others, they lack confidence. They are reluctant to answer questions. Many do only enough to comply with the teacher's wishes and do not challenge themselves to improve their work.
- Many pupils lack pride in their work. It is common for work to be poorly presented.
- Leaders promote pupils' welfare effectively. They give age-appropriate guidance on how to stay healthy and safe. Pupils were able to reflect on what they had learned when speaking with inspectors. Pupils also said that bullying is rare and that, when it happens, they are confident it will be dealt with well.

Behaviour

- There is more disruption to learning than there should be. Pupils are generally responsive to teachers' requests, but not always.
- There is some inappropriate behaviour around the school. For example, inspectors saw some pupils pushing and pulling each other between lessons and some play-fighting which was too boisterous.
- Leaders' work to reduce persistent absence has been more successful than their work to improve attendance overall. The proportion of pupils who are away from school for extended periods has fallen steadily over recent years. However, overall rates of attendance have been below the national average for some time and have only begun to improve recently. Absence and persistent absence remain higher than they should be.
- Pupils around the school are typically polite. They hold open doors, say thank you and are helpful to visitors.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress that pupils made through key stage 4 was below average in 2016. In 2017 it worsened, when pupils' progress was in the bottom 20% of schools nationally

in English, mathematics and languages. It was in the bottom 40% nationally in science and humanities. Pupils' average progress across their other subjects was also in the bottom 20% nationally.

- Provisional outcomes for 2018 indicate that progress has improved in most areas, and most notably mathematics. The attainment of pupils was also better in 2018, with the proportion of pupils achieving grades 5 to 9 in both English and mathematics higher than in 2017. This is because of leaders' successful focus on trying to secure higher grades for more pupils. However, despite these improvements, pupils who completed their key stage 4 study in 2018 made less progress than they should have.
- Pupils in the school now continue to make less progress than they should. This is because staff pay too little attention to their starting points. Expectations of what they can achieve are too low.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils increased in 2018. The progress these pupils made was closer to that of other pupils nationally. However, there remains a difference between their progress and that of other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who join the school with low starting points in reading receive additional support. Some of them make accelerated progress. However, this is inconsistent and some do not catch up. Pupils with SEND are not as well supported as they should be and do not make as much progress as they should.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies between classes. Students generally work enthusiastically and sometimes work is matched well to their needs. However, as elsewhere in the school, teachers sometimes accept short, underdeveloped answers to their questions and do not expect enough of students. While some work is based on teachers' understanding of what students already know and can do, some is not.
- Students pursuing A-level programmes of study have typically made less progress than other students nationally. While this is beginning to improve, the progress they make is still not strong. Students' progress on vocational courses over time is better and is broadly in line with the national average.
- The progress of students in the sixth form who did not achieve grade 4 in GCSE mathematics or English in Year 11 is also stronger. These pupils typically make progress in line with, or better than, the national average.
- Leaders have a more secure understanding of the starting points of students in the sixth form than of pupils in key stages 3 and 4. They have more precise systems for monitoring these students' progress and act when students fall behind. This is beginning to improve the progress that students make.
- Leaders became aware that, in the past, some students were pursuing courses which were not right for them. They now ensure that pupils receive effective impartial advice as they move through key stage 4 to ensure that they choose post-16 programmes of study which suit them. This guidance continues through the sixth form to make sure that students make appropriate choices for their next steps in education and employment. Consequently, a large proportion of students now stay on the same

course throughout their time in the sixth form and the proportion of students who leave Year 13 and remain in education or enter employment or training is high.

- Students in the sixth form benefit from a range of subjects chosen to meet their needs. For example, students who are not studying A-level mathematics, but who are following courses which requires a strong mathematical understanding, undertake a different course to shore up their skills. Their progress is enhanced as a result.

School details

Unique reference number	135650
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10055133

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 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	622
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	83
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr William Crawshay
Principal	Mr Jon Ford
Telephone number	01603 481640
Website	www.open-academy.org.uk
Email address	office@open-academy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 April 2015

Information about this school

- From January to August 2018, the school was led by an acting principal, who is now the vice-principal. The newly appointed principal was absent at the time of the inspection due to ill health. He attended one meeting with an inspector. For the two days of the inspection, the vice-principal was responsible for the operation of the school.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT). DNEAT is a multi-academy trust with 12 trustees. It delegates some of its work to the local governing body of The Open Academy via a scheme of delegation which is reviewed annually. The principal of The Open Academy reports to a school

improvement partner from DNEAT, who in turn reports to the chief executive officer of the trust.

- The academy is part of the Norwich Opportunity Area. This is a network of local partners working together to increase social mobility in Norwich.
- The academy runs a specially resourced provision with 10 places for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder.
- At the time of the inspection, the academy was running a time-limited trial of teaching a small number of boys from one class in a single-sex group for English. This practice is capable of amounting to segregation by sex contrary to the Equality Act 2010. However, the school's rationale for this policy is that boys achieve less well in English than girls and they want to establish if they can improve boys' achievement with this approach. I have concluded that segregation by sex in this one class is for educational reasons, and that it is reasonable and proportionate to remedy the concerns about boys' achievement. Therefore, it meets the requirements for the positive action exemption under section 158 of the Equality Act 2010 and is not unlawful.
- The school makes use of one other education provider: City College Norwich.
- The school is a smaller-than-average secondary school with a smaller-than-average proportion of girls.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the principal, vice-principal and other leaders and teachers across the school. They met with members of the trust, the local governing body and the chief executive officer of DNEAT, as well as speaking with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors visited parts of 48 lessons, sometimes accompanied by leaders, and reviewed the work of pupils in their books. They visited two assemblies.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including leaders' evaluation of the school and improvement plans. They looked at safeguarding records and governing body minutes of meetings. Inspectors also considered the school's information on pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors considered the 27 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the five responses to the free-text option and the 42 responses to Ofsted's survey of the views of staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils during their free time and in arranged meetings. There were no responses to Ofsted's survey of pupils' views.

Inspection team

Andrew Hemmings, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Vanessa Love	Ofsted Inspector
John Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Hood	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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