

Fakenham Academy

Field Lane, Fakenham, NR21 9QT

Inspection dates 11–12 June 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement at GCSE is improving strongly, particularly in English and science, where teachers explain assessment tasks very clearly and all students, including disadvantaged students, make good progress in lessons.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good. They receive effective support from staff when working in small groups, and teachers know their individual learning needs well.
- The sixth form is good. Achievement is high in a wide range of subjects because teaching and assessment are managed effectively.
- Students behave well in lessons and have positive attitudes to their learning. They are polite and courteous. They are kept safe, and they say they feel safe.
- The principal, senior managers and governors monitor the impact of teaching carefully.
- Teaching and learning are good and improving well because staff have well-planned opportunities to develop their teaching expertise and they set demanding targets for students' achievement.
- The principal has ensured that new teachers and managers are held to account for students' achievement through regular monitoring and performance review.
- Faculty heads, subject leaders and heads of house make good use of tracking information about students' progress to identify and support any who are falling behind.
- Governance is organised successfully. Governors are well informed about developments in standards in the academy and use this information appropriately to challenge senior leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some middle-ability students do not make as much progress in mathematics as in other subjects because they are not given enough help to identify and overcome their difficulties in understanding.
- Not all disadvantaged students make the progress they should in mathematics because they are not given the extra support they need soon enough.
- Some teachers do not use the academy behaviour policy consistently and effectively enough, so that some younger students, in particular, do not have positive attitudes to their subject.
- Teachers do not always give students enough guidance on what they need to do to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning in 40 lessons, including nine that were seen jointly with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made short visits to other lessons and tutor group sessions. They looked at samples of students' work, interviewed groups of students, and heard Year 7 students read.
- Meetings were held with the principal and other members of the senior leadership team, faculty heads, subject leaders, house heads, teachers and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documents, including the academy's self-evaluation, school development plans, behaviour records, safeguarding records, governing body documents, and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in the 65 questionnaires returned by academy staff, the 43 responses submitted by parents to the online Parent View survey and the 285 responses to a similar survey carried out by the academy in April 2015.

Inspection team

Roger Waddingham, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ian Bauckham	Additional Inspector
Mark Duke	Additional Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Fakenham Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. In September 2013, it converted to an academy as part of the trust called Norfolk Academies which is sponsored by the Transforming Education in Norfolk (TEN) group. Its predecessor school, Fakenham High School, was judged inadequate and placed in special measures when inspected in March 2013.
- The sixth form, called Fakenham College, takes students from different parts of North Norfolk as well as those from Fakenham Academy itself.
- The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds and few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium is average. This is additional funding allocated by the government for students who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for Year 11 students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There are no students educated off-site for any part of the week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement in GCSE mathematics by:
 - making sure that middle-ability students are helped to recognise and correct their errors in understanding
 - identifying and providing the extra support needed by disadvantaged students more quickly.
- Further improve teaching by:
 - ensuring that all teachers apply the academy behaviour policy consistently and effectively, so that younger students, in particular, concentrate well in lessons
 - giving students enough guidance in class, and in comments on their written work, so that they know what they need to do to improve.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The principal and new senior leadership team work well together to provide effective leadership of the academy. Their clear focus on raising standards and challenging any underperformance has led to the sustained improvement in students' achievement and a marked rise in the quality of teaching. Further planned developments to involve faculty heads in the leadership team mean that the academy shows good capacity to build on recent improvements.
- Senior leaders manage the performance of teaching staff well. A good range of evidence is obtained on a regular basis to ensure that strengths and areas for development in teaching are identified carefully and that appropriate support is offered to individual teachers. The academy makes good use of training opportunities provided through the local academy trust.
- The academy collaborates well with other schools to ensure that its assessments of students' progress are accurate. This means that reliable tracking information is provided for leaders and managers. Faculty heads, subject leaders and house heads all use these assessments well to identify where students are falling behind and to plan the extra support that these students need. Subject leaders have made a reasonable start in working with local schools to develop new assessment arrangements for Key Stage 3 students.
- The academy has a clear schedule for gathering information about its effectiveness. Leaders at all levels and external consultants are involved in this self-evaluation work, so that development points are identified accurately and actions are planned appropriately.
- The sixth form is led and managed well. Students appreciate the good-quality teaching and personal support they receive. They are very positive about life in the sixth form.
- Students appreciate the breadth of subject choice at GCSE and in the sixth form. They also speak very positively about the range of after-school clubs, noting particularly the number of musical performance opportunities provided and sports teams on offer. Students say the guidance they receive from well-trained advisers on future career and education opportunities is very helpful, and they are well prepared for the next stages in their education.
- Activities to promote students, personal development are provided through a programme of themes in assemblies and tutor periods; older students follow a 'learning for life' course, which includes work on human rights and radicalisation. This programme of weekly topics, together with further opportunities in humanities lessons, prepares students effectively for life in modern Britain. Students' spiritual and cultural development is supported well through the extensive use of visits and visiting speakers, which are often targeted at the academy vision for raising students' educational aspirations. Students' social and moral development is promoted successfully through lessons in the arts, sciences and physical education.
- The support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is managed effectively. An increasingly high proportion of these students are making very good progress in English and in science. The impact of support from specialist staff is monitored carefully by the coordinator and adjusted appropriately in the light of students' progress.
- Pupil premium funds are used effectively across a range of subjects to develop eligible students' progress, confidence and well-being, and their engagement in their work. In English, work in small groups, individual support and exam revision have led to a diminishing performance gap in the subject. However, the rate of improvement in mathematics is slower for some of these students because they are not given support quickly enough. Year 7 'catch up' funding is used effectively, with younger students developing their reading and writing skills through individual lessons and the increasing use of computer programs to support both literacy and numeracy.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Staff are well trained in both welfare and safety procedures, and staff and members of the governing body are regularly updated. Leaders have a clear

commitment to equality of opportunity and ensure that there is no discrimination, so that all students have the opportunity to make good progress in their academic and personal development.

- The Norfolk Academy Trust and the sponsoring school network give good support to the academy through staff training visits to other schools, in-house courses and the provision of staff expertise in financial management, assessment and human resources.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have a good grasp of the key strengths and development priorities in the academy. They use reports from senior managers well to challenge them on the impact of initiatives to raise standards. Individual governors oversee different areas in the academy development plan carefully, and use first-hand evidence from their own school visits to monitor progress towards particular objectives.
- Governors show a good awareness of the importance of performance data for analysing the effectiveness of teaching and students' progress. They ensure that appointments to the upper pay scale are linked to effective teaching and represent value for money. They manage teachers' performance by receiving regular reports on teaching quality and support, and have involved themselves in discussion of the impact of reduced funding on staffing allocations.
- Governors are well informed about how pupil premium and catch-up funding is spent, and ensure that good detail on the support provided and its impact is posted on the academy website. They consider changes planned for the curriculum and ensure that these strongly promote key values, such as tolerance, diversity and the understanding of others' beliefs.
- Governors manage their meetings very effectively; papers for discussion are readily available and records of decisions made are well maintained. They review their own expertise carefully and undertake training as needed. Governors use their own skills and experience well to hold managers to account.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are polite and considerate of others, taking good care when moving round the academy site, and showing respect for the buildings and outside areas.
- Students behave well in the great majority of lessons. They arrive on time and ready to learn, settling quickly to the tasks they are set. They show keen interest in lessons and volunteer answers to questions readily, especially in examination classes. Sixth form students are confident and well motivated.
- Students say they enjoy coming to school and feel well supported with any personal concerns they may have. The house system provides both staff and fellow-student mentors to whom students might turn for support.
- Occasionally, in some classes, the concentration and behaviour of a few younger students is not good enough because the teacher does not set clear and firm expectations for behaviour.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they have confidence in the arrangements to prevent bullying and that they feel well cared for. Instances of bullying of any kind are very rare.
- Students have a good awareness of personal safety and health because the academy provides an appropriate programme of topics and visiting speakers, to cover areas such as internet safety and healthy eating.
- The academy has effective procedures to promote good attendance. Managers use attendance information to identify students needing help, and they work well with external agencies to provide support to students and their families. As a result, attendance is improving well from below average; it is now close to the national average.

- The proportion of students missing over 30 school days per year has decreased and is now much closer to the national average. Exclusions from the academy have decreased substantially to well below average; this is linked to the better follow-up now available from the pastoral team.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and improving, so that students make good progress overall. Senior staff make regular, careful checks on teaching quality, and all staff are aware of the academy's expectations for good teaching. Well-targeted support for individual staff has led to a more consistent approach to developing higher standards in many departments.
- Teachers use knowledge of their subjects well to plan clear outcomes for students' work in lessons. They make sure that students know what is expected of them when carrying out individual tasks and what their targets are for courses overall. In GCSE and A-level lessons, teachers explain the examination requirements in good detail.
- In many lessons, questioning is used well. Teachers often ask follow-up questions to check that students have understood new ideas by requiring them to explain their answers. Also, they make sure that students understand subject-specific vocabulary by discussing their understanding of key words.
- Many teachers mark students' written work in good detail, so that students respond to comments and improve their work. However, some teachers do not give students enough guidance, either in class or on their written work, on what at they need to do to improve.
- The great majority of teachers apply the academy behaviour policy effectively in lessons, so that students know what is expected of them and no time is wasted through poor behaviour. Occasionally, however, some teachers do not apply the behaviour policy consistently and effectively enough. This means that some younger students, in particular, do not have positive attitudes to their subject or concentrate well enough.
- The academy has developed its approach to setting and marking homework well, taking account of comments from parents received through the academy's parental survey. Students and staff alike report that the new internet-based system of setting homework has ensured that homework tasks are well understood and deadlines better kept to.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Staff use their very good knowledge of examination board requirements to make sure that students are well prepared for both course assignments and the final testing.
- The teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy is well planned and organised. Students feel they are doing well in these subjects and make good progress in their enjoyment of reading in particular.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' achievement at GCSE is improving well and they make good progress in a wide range of subjects. The work seen in lessons, and the academy's own well-founded assessments, show that this positive trend is set to be continued in 2015.
- Progress in English is good. GCSE students show a good understanding of the requirements for higher grades in both the literature and the language examinations. Younger students develop their writing skills well, benefiting from their teachers' careful explanations of tasks.
- Achievement in mathematics is good overall. Higher-ability students make good progress because they are set demanding work by their teachers, and lower-ability students are given good individual support to help

them do well. Sometimes, however, middle-ability students do not make the progress they could because teachers do not follow up on student's errors made during the lesson.

- Standards in science are improving well. The proportion of students studying the separate sciences who achieved higher grade passes was above average in 2014, and students' current work and academy assessments of their progress show that these above-average standards are set to continue in 2015. The work by current students following the other science courses shows that they are also now making good progress.
- Students have been entered early for English GCSE examinations in the past, but have always been able to continue with their studies to ensure they achieve their best possible grade by the end of Year 11. In mathematics, students have not been entered early for the examination in recent years, and early entry has now been discontinued in English.
- The most-able students make good progress overall. They are set appropriately demanding targets in all their subjects, they show good interest in their tasks and present their written work carefully.
- The school makes effective use of pupil premium funding, especially in English. The gap in performance for disadvantaged students at GCSE is narrowing. In 2014, their attainment was lower than that of their classmates and that found nationally by half a grade in English and one grade in mathematics. Last year, the proportion of disadvantaged students who made the progress expected of them, in English, was in line with that made by other students in the school and others nationally. In mathematics, the proportion of these students who made the expected progress was a little lower than others in school and nationally. Reliable academy assessments show that, this year, disadvantaged students are making good progress in English. Improvements in their progress in mathematics have been less rapid in GCSE classes because they have not always received the extra support they need early enough. However, the progress of disadvantaged students in mathematics is in line with that of classmates in Key Stage 3, as the support given is more timely.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Teachers plan tasks that are well matched to students' individual learning needs and the students show interest in their work. They show confidence in their attitudes to work and know to ask for help when they encounter difficulties.
- Students make good progress in their reading and writing across a range of subjects. The progress of Year 7 students supported through 'catch-up' funding is also good because they receive well-planned help, both in groups and individually. Progress in numeracy is good, with careful attention to both basic number work and drawing graphs and tables accurately.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students achieve well in the sixth form in a wide range of subjects. They start in the sixth form with overall attainment slightly lower than the national averages, and leave with above-average results.
- Students make good progress in the different courses offered. At A level, progress is strong in a number of subjects with substantial entries, including English and the sciences. Students also make good progress in A2 and vocational subjects. Students continuing their work on GCSE English and mathematics show good achievement by the end of their courses.
- The proportion of students completing A2 courses and the proportion of those continuing their studies from A2 to full A level compare favourably with national figures. While the retention figure for students on one-year courses was lower last year, all of these students leaving the college during the year went on to other forms of education or employment.
- Teaching is good or better in many subjects because staff have good subject knowledge and prepare lessons well to match the particular learning needs and abilities of their students. There is a very positive ethos to sixth form lessons, and many students enjoy their learning because their teachers are so

passionate about their subjects.

- Students take a mature attitude to their learning, both during lessons and in private study sessions, so that behaviour is always at least good and often better. They take a pride in their work, and written work is often very well presented. Students say they feel secure and safe. The good support and encouragement that students receive in preparation for the next stages in their education means that a high proportion aspire to university and obtain places.
- The range of GCE subjects offered is wider than commonly found in sixth forms of this size. Students say they particularly value the flexibility of choice this gives them. Although the academy is planning necessary changes to the timetabling of courses offered for financial reasons, they are taking steps to ensure that the wide choice of subjects is maintained as far as possible.
- The sixth form is led and managed well. Students' progress in their courses is tracked very carefully by sixth form staff and they are offered good support if they fall behind with their work.

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	139572
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	450100

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	827
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jennifer Lonsdale
Principal	Matthew Parr-Burman
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01328 862545
Fax number	01328 851767
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