

North Walsham High School

Spenser Avenue, North Walsham, NR28 9HZ

Inspection dates 30 April – 1 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders at all levels, including governors, are effective. Their ambition and rigour are having a significant impact on the achievement of students and upon the quality of teaching.
- Teachers are successful in raising the aspirations and academic success of their students. They plan activities which engage learners well, and which ensure good achievement.
- Overall, attainment is rising and is now broadly average. The attainment of disadvantaged students is improving rapidly, and closing on that of other pupils nationally.
- The progress of students is accelerating and this improvement is being sustained over time.
- The behaviour and safety of students is good. They are courteous and polite, and demonstrate positive approaches to learning with Expert Learners exhibiting great pride in their status.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision for students is a strength of the school. Students are tolerant and understanding towards each other.
- Substantial links with local employers are effective in increasing the ambition and motivation of pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders' ambitious work to improve literacy is not yet consistently applied across the curriculum and this is limiting the further acceleration of progress.
- The progress of the most able has yet to match that of other groups of students in all subjects within the school. This is because their teachers' and leaders' expectations are not high enough.
- Teachers do not give clear enough advice to more-able students about how they can improve their work and make further progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 36 lessons, including two joint observations and a series of short visits to lessons with the headteacher, across a range of subjects in both key stages.
- Inspectors met with governors, staff, students, the school’s challenge partner, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the students at work, and at informal times such as break and lunchtime.
- The inspection team considered 57 parent responses to Parent View together with six letters, emails and phone calls from parents. They also scrutinised additional surveys provided by school leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation including, the improvement plan, information relating to the quality of teaching, data on the attainment and progress of students, school policies and procedures, and the school’s arrangements for safeguarding students.
- Inspectors analysed 48 questionnaires completed by members of staff.
- Inspectors attended an assembly and observed the work of several tutor groups.

Inspection team

Anthony Sharpe, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

John Lucas

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Jennifer Griffiths

Additional Inspector

Clive Allen

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is average. This is additional government funding for students who are eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. Nearly all of the student population is White British.
- A small number of students have the opportunity to attend alternative provision on a short-term basis at the Douglas Bader School. This provision was not utilised by the school at the time of the inspection.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students.
- The governing body has been recently reconstituted following an external review of governance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase the progress of the most able by:
 - increasing the ambition of teachers and students to achieve the highest possible academic outcomes
 - developing teaching strategies which enable the most able to progress even further
 - ensuring that teachers' advice about how to improve their work is clear so that students know exactly what they need to do to achieve higher levels.
- Embed the emerging good practice in literacy by:
 - developing the formal writing skills of students, including the use of technical language and sophisticated sentence structures
 - ensuring that teachers reinforce literacy skills consistently across all subjects, including more effective use of the school library.
- Build on the success of the Attitudes to Learning Programme in order to raise the academic aspirations and literacy skills of students further.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The senior leadership team has increased its capacity and effectiveness with appropriate training and new members. Leaders at all levels have welcomed external support into their school, and have benefited from visiting areas of good practice both locally and further afield. This has fostered a culture of improvement and ambition for the success of students.
- Senior leaders effectively monitor progress and allocate additional resources where progress is not as strong. These strategies are having a positive impact on achievement. For example, the school's reading programme has accelerated progress in this skill, with a resulting positive impact on students' access to learning in other subjects.
- Middle leaders demonstrate ambition and energy in their approach to school improvement. They monitor students' progress closely and in detail; they are able to identify areas where progress needs to accelerate, and they arrange appropriate intervention for students and professional development for teachers. For example, new activities were introduced to engage boys in geography when their progress was seen to be slowing.
- The shared vision of senior leaders and middle leaders is an emerging strength of the school. They now have systems in place to share and challenge the data that they hold. This joint scrutiny has resulted in improved progress for less able students in particular.
- The curriculum is broad and challenging for students. The school surveys the views of learners about each curriculum area, reviews progress frequently, and adjusts the delivery of the curriculum accordingly. For example, leaders have introduced a weekly challenge in mathematics for the most able as a result of these reviews.
- The curriculum prepares students well for life in modern Britain through well-planned lessons and schemes for learning, particularly in history and ethics classes. There are also many extra-curricular opportunities, such as the recent mock general election. Students have opportunities to learn about democracy, the rule of law, and tolerance and understanding of different faiths in the formal curriculum. These are complemented by the use of visiting speakers, together with assembly and tutorial programmes.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision of the school is a strength; a programme of external speakers stimulates students' understanding of other faiths and cultures, and assemblies and tutorial lessons give further opportunity for discussion and debate. Good relations and equality of opportunity are taught effectively through a skilfully planned and carefully monitored programme of assemblies and tutorials.
- The provision for pupil premium students is having a positive impact on their achievement. Expenditure has provided summer schools, small group teaching by teachers and teaching assistants, and extra classes in literacy and numeracy.
- The school has effective systems for monitoring the progress, attendance and behaviour of students who are temporarily placed in alternative provision.
- The school's safeguarding provision meets statutory requirements. The school collaborates well with external agencies in order to keep students safe. Staff are trained appropriately and know how to raise safeguarding concerns.
- A well-planned programme of careers guidance effectively raises students' aspirations. School leaders have developed a network of over 60 business mentors for students who provide work experience and arrange other opportunities that take students beyond their local environment. Students in Years 9, 10 and 11 are able to visit universities and this is helping to raise their aspirations to participate in further and

higher education.

- Numeracy is effectively supported across the curriculum. Specialist teaching and trained support staff have helped students to be more skilled when applying mathematical skills in other subjects, such as geography and science.
- Work on developing a common approach to literacy across the school is not yet complete. Leaders recognise that a significant number of students join the school with below average levels of literacy and have recently enhanced the school's capacity to address this. However, some teachers are not implementing this common approach with sufficient consistency.
- Marking and feedback lacks clarity in terms of how students should improve their work. Inspectors saw evidence of regular assessment in many subjects, but teachers' comments as to how students could improve their work sometimes lacked sufficient detail, especially for the most able.
- Surveys of parents demonstrate that they value the information they receive about the progress of their children. Although a small number of parents raised concerns about different aspects of the school's work, the overwhelming majority say that the school keeps them well informed. School leaders have worked hard to reach parents using different forms of communication, including social media, and survey data shows a high degree of satisfaction from the parent community.
- The local authority is supporting the school effectively. It has brokered additional training for senior and middle leaders, arranged for the external validation of current achievement, and provided opportunities for school leaders to have accredited professional development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have re-constituted the governing body following an external review of governance in order to align their structure more closely with the priorities for school development. They are well informed about progress and the quality of teaching in the school, and use external consultants to confirm internal reports.
 - Governors provide effective support and challenge to the headteacher. They have increased the capacity and expertise within the senior leadership team in order to drive further improvement.
 - Members of the governing body use information well to hold senior leaders to account. Performance management objectives reflect the areas of the school where further improvement is required. Salary progression is closely linked to the progress of students across the school.
 - Governors perform their statutory duties effectively. Link governors review key aspects of the school's work, such as safeguarding and the progress of disadvantaged students.
 - Governors visit the school regularly and report back to the full governing body. They commission external advice to confirm their judgements and to evaluate the quality of their governance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Inappropriate behaviour rarely hinders learning and students' conduct at informal times of the school day is similarly considerate. Students of all ages mix well; they are polite and helpful to visitors. They treat the school facilities well.
- The Attitudes to Learning Programme has had a major impact on student behaviour. Students aspire to be Expert Learners and value its status. Students in Year 11, just weeks from concluding their school career, aspire to be part of this programme as much as their younger peers.
- The overwhelming majority of students take pride in their work.
- Celebration assemblies consolidate the positive aspects of behaviour and learning. Extra-curricular visits and house points reward the overwhelming majority of students who behave well, and the school community has responded with enthusiasm. This is contributing to a harmonious and inclusive

atmosphere.

- School records show that the decline in exclusions is being sustained. There has also been a reduction over time in the number of low-level incidents recorded. Where behaviour does not meet expectations, staff address this swiftly and effectively.
- Students report that bullying is rare and is dealt with well by school leaders when it does occur. Homophobic or other discriminatory behaviour is even more infrequent, and school leaders' response is similarly swift and effective.
- Overall, attendance is rising across the school and is now above average. It is rising for all groups except those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, which remains slightly below average.
- Students feel happy at school and surveys show that the very large majority of parents agree. Punctuality to school and to lessons is very good. Students arrive at each lesson with a positive attitude to learning and this helps them to make good progress.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are aware of the dangers of the internet and the school's work on e-safety has been adopted by schools in other parts of the country.
- Students can calculate risk and described effective teaching relating to gang culture, substance misuse and other threats to personal safety.
- The school leaders follow the correct procedures relating to exclusions and involve the local authority appropriately in order to keep children safe.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs feel safe and value the support that is provided for them. They feel that the school's systems are responsive and keep them safe. The nurture room enhances this feeling of safety and belonging for those who need it.
- Leaders effectively use external resources such as the Safer Schools Partnership to educate students about road safety and anti-social behaviour.
- Surveys and questionnaires show that both parents and staff agree with inspectors that safety is a strength of the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching over time in a substantial range of subjects is leading to improved progress across all year groups. Teachers exhibit enthusiasm and commitment, and students respond in similar fashion in many cases.
- Teachers plan well, have good subject knowledge and base work on a sound analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in students' previous work. Work is well-matched to the needs of learners as a result. In one Year 10 mathematics lesson, the teacher's careful analysis of test data allowed her to target the precise area where students did not understand, resulting in strong progress in this less able group.
- Students enjoy their learning. They find their work engaging and challenging, and this results in a positive climate for learning and accelerated progress.
- High expectations are a feature of teaching in many lessons in this school, particularly of students who are less able or of average ability. Inspectors observed teachers using demanding technical language with these students. In a Year 10 geography lesson on survival in the ice age, the teacher's insistence on accurate terminology equipped students well for a sophisticated discussion that deepened their

understanding of the topic.

- Inspectors found good examples of extended writing in many subjects and from students of all abilities. In a Year 8 history lesson, students were able to write extensively and in detail as they explored prejudice in society and emotional responses to magic.
- Teachers question students well in the majority of lessons. They use open questions that require more extended answers from students. As a result, lower ability students in particular make good progress. In one Year 8 physical education lesson, the teacher used focused questions to improve students' footwork in softball.
- Assessment by teachers is regular in many subjects. Inspectors found evidence of a good dialogue between teachers and students, and examples where students corrected and revised work in the light of teachers' comments. In a Year 7 science lesson, for example, students revised the conclusions of a practical investigation in the light of evaluative comments from their teacher, and deepened their understanding of chromatography as a result.
- Homework is now set more regularly by teachers and can be monitored by school leaders and parents via a link on the school website. Students take advantage of the homework club offered by the school to work in an appropriate environment with support from a teacher.
- Teaching assistants support and challenge students effectively. These assistants are well-trained in supporting the specific needs of disabled students and those who have special educational needs. They also have appropriate subject knowledge for the curriculum areas in which they are deployed.
- Teachers' approach to the development of literacy does not ensure that high standards in spelling, grammar and punctuation are reinforced across the curriculum.
- The advice given to the most-able students as to how to improve their work requires greater clarity. Teachers do not maximise the progress that is possible for these students by using more advanced technical vocabulary, by setting more ambitious learning goals, and by increasing the pace of lessons still further.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students make good progress to attain average standards from below average starting points. Published data shows that the proportion of students enter the school with attainment that is below average, and significantly so in some year groups. Similarly, the reading ages of students on arrival at the school are lower than would be expected for their age. However, attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly average.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE qualifications at grade C and above, and the average point score achieved by students in their best eight qualifications, rose in 2014 to be broadly average. This was in contrast to the trend in other schools nationally. All Year 11 students left the school in 2014 with five or more GCSE qualifications.
- Current progress in Key Stage 4 is strong, particularly for lower and middle ability students. Evidence provided by school leaders, along with the work seen in students' books, indicates that achievement over time is good. Progress in English and mathematics is currently on track to exceed expected progress nationally.
- Progress in Key Stage 3 is consistently strong in mathematics. It has been more variable in English but stronger leadership has now brought about significant improvements. Consultants and staff from another school have externally validated these improvements, and good progress was seen during the inspection. Inspectors found that this evidence of good achievement over time was not limited to English and mathematics.

- The proportion of disadvantaged students making expected and beyond expected progress is rising rapidly over time. Though the attainment of these students is still below that of other students nationally, the gap has closed to under a grade in English and a third of a grade in mathematics, and is continuing to narrow. The gap between these students and others in the school across all subjects is less than half of a grade.
- The subsequent achievement of disadvantaged students demonstrates improving rates of progress. Disadvantaged students are currently on track to exceed expected progress nationally in English, and in mathematics to match national expectations.
- The progress of the most-able students across the curriculum and over time has accelerated but lacks consistency across the curriculum. The school's Attitudes to Learning Programme and programmes from other educational providers have improved the skills and raised the aspirations of the most able, but variability between teachers and subjects remains.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve as well as their peers and, in the case of statemented students in 2014, significantly better than expected.
- Inspectors found that school leaders have successfully addressed the areas where published data showed less than expected progress in 2014. School data and inspection evidence agree that achievement of students in science over time is good, particularly in Key Stage 3, though progress in modern foreign languages is more variable.
- There is no longer a policy to have students entered early for GCSE qualifications. The one exception is that all Year 9 students take the GCSE in Film Studies early in order to increase their analytical skills.

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	121154
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	462062

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	673
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alex Robinson
Headteacher	Caroline Brooker
Date of previous school inspection	16 July 2013
Telephone number	01692 402581
Fax number	01692 500643
Email address	office@northwalshamhigh.norfolk.sch.uk

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