

Hethersett Academy

Queen's Road, Hethersett, Norwich NR9 3DB

Inspection dates	12–13 January 2016
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding academy

- Pupils at Hethersett Academy are prepared exceptionally well for a successful future. The overwhelming majority are very happy in the academy, and are securing excellent academic and personal achievements.
- The academy's success is founded upon an absolute conviction that all pupils can achieve well. This is matched by very high levels of support and care, as well as the provision of a superb range of enrichment opportunities.
- Leaders and governors share a very clearly communicated vision of high expectations and aspirations for pupils. The fostering of personal resilience and a dedication to learning in pupils is central to their actions, and is being successfully realised throughout the academy.
- No pupil is left unchallenged or unsupported at Hethersett. The Principal and senior leaders are rigorous in their attention to the progress and welfare of every pupil. They take swift, effective action to ensure that appropriate provision or support is in place where it is most needed.
- Disadvantaged pupils make better progress at Hethersett than other pupils nationally because the academy ensures that they receive extensive, effective support. As a result, the remaining differences between the progress they make and that of other pupils in the academy is rapidly closing.
- Teachers plan lessons that engage and inspire pupils. They understand pupils' needs exceptionally well, and structure lessons and tasks highly effectively to support all learners.
- Pupils find their learning challenging but succeed because they are guided so well. They are eager to learn, and teachers are unafraid of introducing and exploring high-level knowledge, ideas, skills and techniques.
- Pupils' behaviour and conduct are exemplary. They are polite, inquisitive and highly supportive of one another. Systems for managing behaviour are clear and consistently applied by all teachers. Pupils are regularly and systematically praised and rewarded for exceptional effort and for their achievements.
- The curriculum places a strong emphasis upon academic achievement, while also ensuring that a broad range of subjects and extra-curricular activities are undertaken by all pupils. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is central to the curriculum and very effectively nurtured and monitored by leaders.

Full report

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all pupils apply consistently high standards to the presentation and organisation of their work in books and folders.
- Ensure that the remaining small gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the academy is closed.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Dynamic and determined leadership has ensured that Hethersett is an exceptionally effective academy. Since the academy opened in 2013, the multi-academy Inspiration Trust, governors and senior leaders have acted resolutely to implement their vision of an outstanding education for pupils. The positive impact of the change is widely recognised and hugely valued by the vast majority of pupils, staff and parents.
- The Principal and his senior team plan meticulously and take swift action to meet the needs of pupils. Standards are monitored closely and the impact of new initiatives evaluated carefully. As a result, pupils receive closely targeted support to ensure that they secure outstanding outcomes.
- Leaders at all levels are held closely to account for their areas of responsibility, but are well supported by the networks in place within the trust and a wide range of training and professional development opportunities. As a result, leaders are enthusiastic and ambitious for their pupils and teams; they are reflective and have a keen desire to maintain and build on the gains made in the last two years.
- An excellent range of professional development and training opportunities are available to staff. Performance management systems challenge and support teachers robustly to ensure that they are developing their practice and that pupils make outstanding progress. These systems have delivered strong consistency to the teaching pupils experience.
- Leaders meticulously track and monitor the allocation of the additional funds they receive to support pupils, such as the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. The actions and strategies to support disadvantaged pupils have had a marked impact on raising their overall attainment and progress. Although their outcomes do not yet quite match those of other pupils in the academy, this gap is rapidly closing and they now make progress in English and mathematics that is comparable to other, non-disadvantaged, pupils nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive strong support and effective teaching because leaders have a good understanding of their needs and communicate these effectively to teachers. Good links with primary schools help to ensure continuity and information sharing through their transition to the academy. Teaching assistants are allocated effectively and the curriculum adjusted where appropriate to meet individual needs.
- The academy's curriculum places a firm emphasis on providing a solid academic foundation for all pupils. It also features an extensive commitment to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils. The longer academy day allows time for both additional intensive support in core subjects, and the choice from an exceptionally diverse range of enrichment courses. Activities such as computer coding, dance and music workshops, and the Sports Leaders programme excite pupils and promote the adoption of healthy and inquisitive lifestyles.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils know about fundamental British values such as tolerance and respect for others, democracy and the rule of law. There is a culture in lessons of respectful debate and discussion, and all pupils learn about a range of faiths and cultures through religious education and social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) lessons. A carefully planned programme of tutorial and assembly activities provides regular opportunities for reflection and to help pupils understand current affairs and the wider world.
- The care and welfare of looked after children who attend the academy are effective and well coordinated. Liaison with carers and other agencies is appropriate and regular and they receive good support from designated staff.
- A few pupils attend alternative provision on a part-time basis. Regular contact is made with these providers to monitor the pupils' progress, attendance and well-being.
- The multi-academy trust that sponsors the academy is providing highly effective challenge and systematic support to academy leaders. The trust has acted effectively to ensure that strong networks between the academy and other trust schools enable teachers and leaders to collaborate, share best practice and accurately evaluate the impact of their work.

■ The governance of the academy

- Governors work very closely with the trust and academy leaders to ensure that the shared vision of an outstanding education for all pupils is delivered. They possess a wide range of expertise and experiences, and access training and support through the trust and collaboration with other local governing bodies. As a result, they challenge leaders knowledgeably and robustly around all aspects of the academy's work, and help to provide valuable links to the local community, local businesses and higher education providers.
- Governors are a regular and active presence in the academy, checking on the progress of initiatives and closely monitoring the work of leaders. For example, the exemplary arrangements around safeguarding are audited and checked regularly by the responsible governor. Minutes of meetings reveal that governors check regularly on pupils' progress and attendance, particularly those of disadvantaged pupils, requesting more information when they feel it is required and praising leaders justifiably for the achievements that have been secured.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are fully trained and knowledgeable about the potential risks to pupils and how to report and act on concerns. Procedures and actions to support vulnerable pupils are coordinated and administered well, with effective liaison in place with other agencies. The academy has fully implemented the government's latest guidance around the 'Prevent' strategy to counter radicalisation.
- The academy site is very secure. A comprehensive range of risk assessments are undertaken and regularly reviewed, and very thorough procedures for checking the suitability of adults working in the academy are in place.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers at Hethersett demonstrate very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They use their secure subject knowledge to plan excellent lessons that go above and beyond simply 'meeting the needs' of pupils towards significantly extending their abilities and understanding. For example, highly effective mathematics teachers closely check pupils' progress and provide regular feedback to ensure that topics are mastered. Where gaps in understanding are identified, pupils are quickly supported and directed to complete challenging and relevant new problems. Advanced topics are introduced earlier in Key Stage 3 through skilful demonstration, questioning and task setting.
- Teachers within and across subjects plan collaboratively and deliver lessons in a similar way. As a result, pupils understand very clearly what is expected of them and make strong progress across the curriculum. Every lesson features the 'Hethersett 10' agreed elements of excellent teaching, which ensure that pupils are given very clear guidance around what is expected of them and how to do well. This model helps pupils at every level of ability to aim high and succeed.
- Excellent communication skills are developed because teachers structure class discussion and group tasks very effectively. Inspectors saw striking examples of pupils being guided by the teacher to fluently and confidently discuss challenging topics, such as momentum in science and layers of inference in English. In one drama lesson, pupils explored the difficult theme of alienation with great maturity and sensitivity to the views of others. A common feature of these activities is the confident use of advanced subject terminology by teachers and pupils.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and helpfully using a common marking sticker that gives praise, clear advice and direction. Comments are focused and easy to understand, and teachers pick up on frequent errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar to prompt correction. As a result, pupils gain a highly developed understanding of their own areas of strength and weakness.
- In some instances, the quality of pupils' work is not matched by the highest standards of presentation in books and folders. Teachers are beginning to address this in innovative ways. For example, parents are often given the opportunity to use parental feedback stickers to review their child's work in books, often having a striking impact in terms of improved focus and effort.
- Teachers assess pupils frequently and accurately, providing parents with regular information on the progress their children are making. Teachers and leaders across the trust collaborate effectively and share best practice to help them make accurate predictions; these inform a rigorous programme of support and revision for pupils.

- The academy places a strong emphasis on improving reading skills. The centrally located library is popular and well resourced; pupils regularly read aloud in lessons, demonstrating confidence and fluency. A range of reading support programmes ensure that pupils reach age-related expectations for reading, and all pupils read independently once a week in tutorial periods.
- Homework is used systematically to consolidate and deepen learning. The academy follows a regular timetable for homework that is clearly understood by pupils. Much of the work set can be accessed using the internet and supervised study sessions as part of the extended academy day allow additional time to develop and encourage pupils' independent study skills. Pupils find their homework challenging but understand the importance of consolidating their knowledge and skills.
- The teaching of additional enrichment sessions during the extended academy day is of the highest quality. For example, a film studies lesson exploring dystopian representations, and a science lesson in which pupils were enthusiastically tested for glucose and proteins, both enabled pupils to engage with ideas and concepts of a much more advanced nature than might be expected. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the opportunity these sessions give them to explore their interests and develop deeper practical and academic skills and knowledge.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils feel very safe and well looked after in the academy, a confidence that is shared by the overwhelming majority of parents. The academy is a welcoming and secure environment, with bright displays that celebrate pupils' achievements, house competitions, enrichment activities, pupil leadership and attendance. Pupils are supervised well and have absolute confidence in the ability of staff to help and support them should they experience any problems.
- The extended academy day and enrichment programme provides outstanding opportunities for personal development. Pupils are highly enthusiastic about the wide range of academic, artistic, sporting and practical opportunities available to them. This begins from the very start of their time in the academy, when Year 7 pupils attend a team-building residential camp during their first week.
- Incidents of bullying are very rare and are dealt with robustly. Pupils and the large majority of parents have confidence in the academy's systems to tackle such behaviour. Student guidance counsellors provide excellent support to pupils, and information about bullying and how to seek help is prominently displayed around the academy. One older pupil accurately summarised that, 'We don't judge people by their differences here.'
- Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe online because they are taught explicitly about the potential risks, in lessons, assemblies and talks on the topic. The academy has an online 'bully button' system in place to allow pupils to report concerns to staff securely.
- There are numerous opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles. The student council is very active, providing meaningful feedback to leaders that guides them in improving the curriculum and the academy environment. The prefect system encourages older pupils to model the best standards of behaviour and conduct to younger pupils by, for example, helping to supervise at break times and during the entry to assemblies.
- The academy has an exceptionally strong programme of impartial careers advice and guidance that begins in Year 7. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in work-related learning placements, and personal interviews with a professional careers adviser are provided for older pupils. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with disabilities or who have special educational needs receive extensive additional support in preparing applications and identifying appropriate next steps. As a result, almost every pupil secures appropriate further education, employment or training. Inspectors were struck by the number of pupils who had very clear and ambitious aims for further study beyond their time at Hethersett.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils demonstrate an obvious desire to learn in lessons. They work cooperatively within groups to share ideas and perspectives, demonstrating supportive and well-developed communication skills. A culture of enquiry and endeavour has been successfully embedded; pupils work hard and are generally eager to contribute to whole-class discussion or answer questions.

- Pupils' conduct around the academy site is excellent. The transition between lessons is swift and calm, and pupils typically greet visitors and each other politely. On a relatively compact site, the staggered lunchtime passes very smoothly, with no significant disruption to lessons, because behaviour is orderly and well supervised.
- The consequences for not behaving well are very clearly understood, and teachers apply common systems consistently. As a result, disruption to learning and the use of fixed-term exclusions are extremely rare and well below the national average. Parents and pupils have confidence that behaviour is excellent.
- Pupils' good effort and achievements are routinely celebrated and rewarded. Pupils appreciate gaining 'college points' and they can earn a 'golden ticket' to exchange for rewards. As a result, pupils are well motivated and feel appreciated, adding to the cooperative and calm climate in the academy.
- Attendance at the academy has improved significantly in the last year and is now much better than the national average as a result of very close monitoring and work with families. The academy tracks the attendance of groups of pupils closely and emphasises the link between good attendance and achievement strongly with pupils. High numbers of pupils also willingly attend the additional sessions the academy periodically runs after school or during weekends and holidays.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- In 2015, pupils at Hethersett achieved significantly better examination outcomes from their various starting points than similar pupils nationally. The progress pupils made across subject areas at GCSE is among the strongest in the country. This pattern of outstanding progress is securely in evidence throughout current year groups as a result of outstanding teaching and assessment.
- The proportion of pupils in both English and mathematics who make or exceed the expected level of progress from their various starting points is much higher than the national average. The academy regularly measures the progress pupils are making in these two key areas and operates a rigorous system of catch-up sessions and support programmes to ensure that very few fail to meet their potential in these key areas.
- In English and mathematics, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who made or exceeded the expected level of progress in 2015 was similar to other, non-disadvantaged, pupils nationally. In current year groups their progress is even stronger, with the achievement gap between them and other, non-disadvantaged, pupils in the academy closing rapidly.
- From their different starting points, pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs make similar strong progress to other pupils in the academy. In Key Stage 4, they secure better outcomes and make better progress than similar pupils do nationally. In current year groups this is carefully monitored by teachers and leaders, with effective support and targeted teaching put in place where it is most needed.
- The proportion of pupils securing A* and A grades at GCSE is much higher than the national average and rising. Most-able pupils make significantly better progress from their higher starting points than similar pupils do nationally. The high expectations and excellent subject knowledge of teachers lead to outstanding outcomes for this group of pupils.
- Standards are high across the curriculum, but particularly high proportions of pupils secure much better than average outcomes in English, geography, history, mathematics and design technology.
- The academy's enrichment programme, run as a feature of the extended academy day, provides a significant and increasing number of pupils with additional, alternative accreditation and qualifications, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards scheme, the Sports Leaders scheme and the Scholars Programme.
- The very small number of pupils who attend alternative provision on a part-time basis make good progress as a result of close liaison between the academy and the providers.

School details

Unique reference number	140188
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10009925

This inspection 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	535
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Daynes
Principal	Gareth Stevens
Telephone number	01603 810924
Website	www.inspirationtrust.org/our_schools/hethersett_academy
Email address	office@inspirationtrust.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this academy

- Hethersett Academy is a smaller than average-sized secondary academy. It admits pupils aged 11–16. Its predecessor school, Hethersett High School and Science College, was judged inadequate following an inspection in March 2013. The academy opened in November 2013 under the sponsorship of the Inspiration Trust. The current Principal took up his post in November 2013. A local governing board has since been established.
- The large majority of pupils are White British, with a smaller proportion than average coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. A smaller than average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding to support pupils who are in the care of the local authority or who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average. There is a slightly higher proportion than average of pupils with a statement of educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The academy uses alternative provision to educate a very small number of its pupils part time at Easton and Otley College and Attleborough Academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in 57 lessons in order to contribute to their evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Many of these observations were conducted jointly with members of the academy's leadership team. Inspectors also observed small-group revision and nurture sessions, enrichment activities, tutorial periods and assemblies.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, academy leaders, teachers, support staff, the Chief Executive Officer of the Inspiration Trust, the Chair of the Governing Body and various groups of pupils. A telephone meeting was also held with the sponsor and Chairman of the trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of academy documentation including that relating to policies, minutes of governing body meetings, annual review, self-evaluation, pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance data, and a wide range of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in 79 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 28 questionnaires returned by academy staff.
- Inspectors held telephone conversations with leaders at alternative providers used by the academy to educate a small proportion of their pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised the various forms of communication that the academy uses, including the website and information sent to parents and other stakeholders.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection team

Richard Spencer, lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
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Howard Lay	Ofsted Inspector
John Randall	Ofsted Inspector

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