

Cromer Academy

Norwich Road, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 0EX

Inspection dates

7–8 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Through his inspirational leadership, the principal has established a culture of high aspirations, at all levels. Leaders are unequivocally relentless in their focus on continuous and rapid improvement.
- The trust, senior leaders and governors are, collectively, highly ambitious to secure the very best outcomes for pupils. As a result, they have a very accurate view of the school's strengths and what needs to improve.
- Under the clear direction of senior leaders, subject leadership has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- Strong leadership of teaching and learning, at all levels, has ensured that, overall, teaching is good. Where further improvement is needed, leaders' actions are swift and effective.
- Typically, pupils make good or better progress. Although the progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved, it does not yet match, consistently, the progress other pupils make nationally in all subjects.
- In a minority of lessons, occasionally, the work some teachers set is too easy for the most able pupils and so a little time is wasted.
- A few teachers do not give pupils precise enough feedback on exactly what they need to do to improve their work and so make faster progress.
- The very well-planned curriculum ensures that pupils make good progress overall and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils' conduct and standards of behaviour are outstanding. They are rightly proud of their school, work hard and are courteous, tolerant and respectful to adults and to each other.
- Attendance has improved because of the relentless focus on this aspect by all staff, senior leaders and governors.
- Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and effective. The safety and welfare of all pupils is of the highest priority. The care the school offers to vulnerable pupils is exceptional.
- Parents, almost universally, hold the school in the highest regard, in its work and its improving status in the local community.
- Governors are skilled, experienced and effective in holding senior leaders to account and in supporting rapid improvements in the school's performance.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning so that:
 - any remaining differences between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are diminished rapidly over time
 - the most able pupils are challenged, consistently, to achieve their very best
 - all teachers provide precise feedback to pupils so they know exactly what they need to do to improve their work and make faster progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The principal and senior leadership team have ensured that the school is set securely on the journey towards its vision of being 'exceptional without exception'. High aspirations are the expected norm in every aspect of the school's work. In this caring culture, the relentless pursuit of excellence ensures that most pupils make good progress, across a range of subjects. This is evidenced in the views of one parent, who echoed the views of many when they said, 'I have nothing but praise for the principal and all of the staff. It is very clear that this school has drastically improved in all areas.'
- The school's values are a living and intrinsic element of the daily life of a Cromer Academy pupil. Parents, almost universally, speak of 'transformational' leadership and the nurturing ethos in the school. As one of them said, 'Both my children are thriving in this positive and encouraging environment.' Another commented, 'The teachers really will go the extra mile because they know and care about each and every child.'
- The school's evaluation of its own performance is accurate and transparent. Development plans are sharply focused to ensure that the priorities identified are addressed. Swift, effective and decisive action is taken to secure rapid improvement. Leaders are fully prepared to make difficult decisions when required. In particular, to make sure that all groups of pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Middle leaders are now empowered to lead their subjects effectively. They are a key strength of the good and improving provision in the school. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Working closely with the senior leadership team, they are well supported to manage the performance of their own teams in sustaining and improving outcomes for all pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning is rigorously checked. This is implemented through a regular and intensive programme of lesson observations; pupils' satisfaction surveys; reviews of pupils' work in books and assessments of their progress, based on 'mastery checkpoints', undertaken every half term. Assessment information is accurate, shared and understood by all staff and governors. As a result, it is used very well to make sure that pupils continue to make good progress over time.
- Leaders and managers use information from routine checks to plan interventions, so that pupils get access to any additional help they require quickly. This information also ensures that future staff training and development planning for continuous improvement are effective. The strong focus on the quality of teaching supports and encourages staff to try out innovative approaches, based on current research. The good practice identified is shared effectively, across subjects, through peer observations and regular team meetings.
- They vast majority of staff, including recently appointed newly qualified teachers, agree that they are supported very well by leaders at all levels.
- A robust and effective framework has been established to reduce any differences in the performance of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. A pupil premium task force meets weekly. The spending of pupil premium funding is tracked meticulously to ensure that interventions are effective. The outcomes of interventions are checked

carefully, through regular reports to senior leaders and governors, to ensure that pupils' progress continues to improve.

- Pupils' attendance is monitored thoroughly and systematically, including for the small number of pupils who attend off-site training at a local college. Absence is followed up quickly. Improvement actions taken include home visits and regular contact with parents. As a result, current attendance is above national average and at the highest level achieved by the school.
- The views of pupils and parents are valued by senior leaders. They are a powerful force for change in the school. The principal meets regularly with the student council and the parental advisory board. Both groups have made a substantial contribution to the development of the school's vision and values and to continuous improvements over time.
- The curriculum is well planned, broad and balanced. It is instrumental in raising pupils' aspirations and, in turn, their achievement. Social, moral and cultural skills are developed very well through extra-curricular activities, such as sports and drama. Additional studies are designed to enhance pupils' academic achievement and to support their future progression. The promotion of British values is fully embedded across subjects. These values are evidenced clearly in pupils' attitudes to each other and in the day-to-day life and culture in the school.
- Careful management of finances and effective deployment of staff and resources have ensured that a continuing programme of refurbishment has transformed the school's premises and created a building which the school community is proud of.
- The school has strong links with other schools locally and within the Inspiration Trust. Work with local primary schools ensures a smooth transition for new pupils who are moving to secondary education at the end of the primary phase. As a result of this, and of the increasingly high regard parents and the community have for the school, the number of pupils enrolling in Year 7 was significantly higher in 2016 than in the previous year.

Governance of the school

- Governors, well supported by trustees, are rigorous in holding the principal and senior leaders to account for pupils' progress and for the performance of all staff.
- They bring a wealth of experience to their roles. Consequently, they are well equipped to offer challenge and support, in appropriate measures, to ensure that high aspirations are achieved. Their regular checks and review processes are very effective; in particular, in overseeing the effectiveness of safeguarding and in sustaining a cycle of continuous improvement in pupils' progress.
- Where action is needed to raise standards further, governors maintain a systematic focus on the impact of interventions and ensuring that value for money is secured. As a result, for example, differences are diminishing between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Pupils' attendance is currently at its highest level.
- Working closely with parents and senior leaders, governors are fully engaged in school life.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils know they are safe and well cared for. Parents are typically unequivocal in this view. Senior leaders and governors are very effective in ensuring that statutory requirements are met. The support and care provided by staff for vulnerable pupils is exceptional. As a result, they make good progress, both academically and socially, from their starting points when they join the school. Training for staff and governors is carefully checked and regularly updated, including the required training to prevent radicalisation and extremism. Working relationships with other agencies are strong and focused relentlessly on making a difference to pupils' lives. Follow-up actions are pursued rigorously. In particular, in cases where progress with required actions does not meet the school's high expectations. Close contact is maintained with parents and carers to ensure that pupils have all the support they need, and that interventions are having a positive impact on pupils' well-being and academic achievement.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils benefit from good-quality teaching and, as a result, they achieve well.
- The help that teachers and learning support staff provide for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is individualised and effective. The well-planned curriculum, including additional studies, sport and elective choices, lays carefully crafted foundations for pupils' continuing good progress across most subjects over time.
- High expectations are the hallmark of good teaching at Cromer Academy. The tracking of pupils' progress is accurate and well managed. Teachers typically have an in-depth knowledge of their subjects and of pupils' abilities. This knowledge underpins their effective planning and the excellent working relationships that they establish quickly with pupils, in lessons and in daily life in the school.
- In the most effective lessons, work is challenging and expectations are typically high. Teachers' questioning is well targeted and determined in helping the most able pupils to extend their understanding. Lower-ability pupils are supported appropriately, through skilful questioning, to build accurate responses and gain confidence. In these lessons, pupils know that teachers demand the very best from them. As a result, they take care to set out and present their work neatly. Learning proceeds at a brisk pace. Progression to the next stage is managed well for all groups.
- For example, in a Year 8 science lesson pupils were exploring sound and hearing. Their answers to the teacher's questions were securely grounded in the excellent teacher/pupil relationships that were clearly routine and well-established. Pupils were not afraid to offer answers or to support, as well as challenge, each other's responses. They were fascinated by the activity, demonstrating good knowledge and understanding, as they investigated sound vibrations using a tuning fork and a ping-pong ball.
- At key stage 4, in a history lesson, a strong focus on examination techniques supported the highly effective development of pupils' understanding of the terms and language

associated with the subject. As a result, these pupils knew exactly what they needed to do to achieve higher grades.

- In a minority of lessons seen, where teaching was less effective, a few teachers did not set work hard enough for the most able pupils and so some time was wasted as pupils waited to move on to the next stage. Occasionally, misconceptions were not picked up quickly enough because teachers' checks on pupils' learning were not as thorough as they could be.
- Homework is set regularly using the school's online system. The overall quality of teachers' marking has improved significantly since the last inspection. Typically, teachers follow the school's marking policy by providing incisive, clear and well-focused feedback in commenting on pupils' work. However, in a few cases, feedback is too imprecise to help pupils understand exactly what it is they need to do to improve further.
- Classroom and corridor displays are designed carefully to celebrate achievement. In addition, they promote pupils' literacy and the technical language of subjects very well. For example, an engaging display, using popular cartoon characters as the theme, aimed to deepen pupils' understanding and use of words, such as, gravity, projectile and launch.
- A love of reading and literature is encouraged by teachers; for pupils' pleasure, as well as to support their learning and good progress overall.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils feel very safe and secure because the school has established safeguarding as a high priority. They are universally positive about their school experience and life as part of the Cromer Academy community. As a result, inspectors were not surprised when pupils told them, 'It's like a family here'.
- The school environment is friendly and welcoming. Bullying is extremely rare. Pupils are very confident that if any bullying happens, 'things are sorted out quickly'. They know how to keep safe and understand the risks associated with the use of the internet and social media. They are very clear about the principles of equality and diversity, so they are tolerant of individual differences and respectful to each other – as evidenced when one of them said to inspectors, 'It's ok to be different in this school.'
- Parents are overwhelmingly effusive about the value the school adds, not just to pupils' individual academic achievement but also to their personal and social development overall. Pupils are welcoming to visitors and to new pupils joining the school.
- All groups of pupils readily take on leadership roles, including those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, in acting as school council members, pupil librarians and reading mentors in school, as well as in local primary schools. These roles are very effective in supporting the development of pupils' skills for progression to the next stage of their education – as evidenced in the confident,

articulate manner in which pupils spoke to inspectors.

- Planned work experience, in Year 10, helps pupils to understand the skills needed for future employment. This, together with senior leaders' strong focus on providing effective careers information advice and guidance, equips all pupils with the information they need to make informed choices as they prepare for their next steps.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They typically work hard, attend regularly and are punctual to lessons. The senior leadership team's commitment to meeting and greeting pupils, at the gate, at the start of each school day, has paid real dividends in terms of improving pupils' behaviour since the last inspection.
- Pupils are eager to arrive at school on time. They speak sociably with each other and with staff members as they walk in through the gate. Most pupils are compliant with school uniform regulations and wear their uniform with pride. The very few instances of non-compliance with uniform expectations are resolved easily by staff if they arise.
- The very good working relationships which are established quickly between teachers and pupils play a significant role in ensuring that the required high standards of behaviour are sustained over time.
- Teachers are consistent in applying the rewards and sanctions set out in the behaviour policy. As a result, pupils understand the boundaries set and what is expected of them and of their teachers. Attitudes to learning are highly positive and so the school is a calm and purposeful environment in which to study.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils start school in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are broadly average. When they move on to the next stage at the end of Year 11, from different starting points, they typically make good progress overall.
- The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in five GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics, has increased and is above the national average. Almost twice the number of pupils achieved the English Baccalaureate in 2016 than in the previous year.
- Performance in a few GCSE areas in 2016, in particular in art, French, science and product design, was not as strong as in other subjects. Senior leaders took swift action. As a result, the school's assessment information and pupils' work seen during the inspection confirms that most of them are currently making good progress in these subjects.
- The school is highly inclusive. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make good progress overall. Nevertheless, due to the small number of pupils, outcomes tend to fluctuate, across the range of abilities, within these groups each year. Current assessment information, and pupils' work, indicates that any differences in progress, between these pupils and

other pupils nationally, are diminishing, including for the most able.

- The additional funding for Year 7 pupils who need extra help in English and mathematics is used effectively so they catch up quickly.
- Pupils receive timely and highly effective advice to help them to make informed choices when they move on to the next stage of their education.

School details

Unique reference number	137431
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10021786

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	471
Appropriate authority	The academy trust
Chair	Tim O'Shea
Principal	Geoff Baker
Telephone number	01263 511433
Website	www.inspirationtrust.org/our_schools/cromer_academy
Email address	ca-office@inspirationtrust.org
Date of previous inspection	4–5 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It became part of the Inspiration Trust, a multi-academy trust, in September 2013.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged, and therefore supported by the pupil premium, is average.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups, and those who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- The proportions of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those with a statement of special educational needs, and/or an education, health and

care plan, are lower than the national average.

- The school offers high needs specialist resource base provision, separately funded by the local authority, for a small number of pupils.
- A few Year 11 pupils attend vocational courses at Easton and Otley College for one day each week.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across subjects and year groups in 40 lessons, or parts of lessons, and listened to four pupils read. Some of the observations were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspection team looked closely at pupils' work in a sample of books, across a range of abilities, subjects and groups. They also reviewed and discussed pupils' work with them in the lessons they observed.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior and middle leaders, teachers, governors, including the chair of governors and representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils from all year groups in lessons, in meetings and informally around the school at break and lunchtimes. They also joined members of the senior leadership team in greeting pupils, as they arrived at school, and observed pupils' conduct and behaviour throughout the school day.
- In addition to 65 written comments from parents, inspectors took account of 77 responses to Parent View, 44 staff and 66 pupils' responses to the Ofsted online questionnaires.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included senior leaders' evaluations of the school's performance; improvement plans; policies; minutes of meetings and information relating to current standards, pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Garrett	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Whear	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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