

# Inspection of Neale-Wade Academy

Wimblington Road, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 9PX

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Inspection dates: 2 and 3 November 2021

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Sixth-form provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils have mixed views about life at the Neale-Wade Academy. While many are happy and enjoy school, a number of pupils and their parents say that they would not recommend the school to others.

Pupils feel they have not always been well looked after. They say this is now changing. The new principal and his team have quickly addressed how the school deals with bullying and behaviour. Unkind behaviour is not tolerated. Bullying is now dealt with much more robustly and effectively. While some bullying still remains, many pupils told inspectors that they now trust leaders and staff to deal with it and make it stop. Pupils are well supported by the pastoral team.

Pupils do not always achieve as well they could. This is because, while some curriculum plans are clearer than others, not all leaders have planned their subjects logically to help pupils build their knowledge.

Pupils access a well-planned life skills programme. They learn about a range of topics including democracy, healthy relationships and careers. Pupils value this programme as well as the wide range of after-school enrichment clubs available to them.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Since the previous inspection, standards in the school have declined. A significant proportion of parents have lost faith in the school. Their concerns about behaviour and the quality of education are justified. From September 2020, the recently appointed principal, supported by the Active Learning Trust (the trust), has made swift changes. They have begun to make the school better for the whole community.

Curriculum leaders have reviewed their curriculum plans to make them more ambitious than before. Many curriculum plans now identify clearly what is important for pupils to learn. Not all plans, however, have arranged knowledge in an order that helps pupils with their learning. This means that some pupils find what they are taught confusing. In addition, some curriculum plans lack the detail needed to support teachers to teach them well.

The way teachers check what pupils know is inconsistent. While some subjects have helpful assessment that identifies gaps in pupils' understanding, this is not the case in all subjects. Leaders are still developing assessment across the school, including in the sixth form.

Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge to teach their subjects. Many teachers think carefully about how the activities in the classroom help pupils and sixth-form students learn. Some, however, do not have high enough expectations of what

Neale-Wade pupils can do. They choose activities which do not help pupils learn as much as they could.

Support for the weakest readers is a strength of the school. Appropriately trained staff quickly identify and support pupils who have fallen behind. Staff help pupils to catch up with their peers and become confident readers. Leaders' comprehensive plans to promote reading for enjoyment are beginning to work. Pupils have borrowed more books from the library than in previous years.

Leaders have prioritised improving the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). While pupils' needs are now accurately identified, this information is not used sufficiently well by teachers. This is because pupil 'passports' lack specific detail linked to these pupils' needs. Consequently, a small number of pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should.

Many pupils behave in a polite and courteous manner in and out of class. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour around the school is much better now than in the past. As one pupil noted, 'Teachers are much stricter now.' However, internal exclusions remain high. Not all staff use the behaviour policy consistently well. Some pupils' learning is disrupted by poor behaviour. While pupils' behaviour is improving, it is not good.

The life skills curriculum is well planned from Year 7 to Year 11. The programme is engaging, age appropriate and has begun to support pupils' wider development and knowledge of how others may be different from themselves. Pupils have a growing respect for each other which, in turn, is improving pupils' attitudes.

Pupils and students in the sixth form receive a range of effective impartial careers advice and guidance that supports them with their next steps. An increasing number of students stay on at the school's sixth form. Other aspects of wider sixth-form life, for example life skills, need to improve so students have a rich set of opportunities and experiences.

The trust and governing body work closely with leaders to make the school better. Staff at all levels understand that more needs to be done to improve the school and gain the trust of the school community once again. However, they also find that the workload involved in the changes they are helping to make is high. While leaders monitor this, they have not been able to prevent it from causing some concern among some staff.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

During the inspection, inspectors found minor administrative errors in the single central record. These were rectified before inspectors left the school site.

Pupils are kept safe at Neale-Wade. Pupils' confidence in how staff deal with safeguarding issues, including bullying, is growing. Staff are appropriately trained and recognise the risks to pupils in the local area. Staff know the procedures for reporting concerns to the safeguarding team. Safeguarding records are detailed and show prompt responses to concerns about pupils. Leaders work with a range of different partners to ensure pupils get the support they need. Staff teach pupils about how to keep safe and, as a result, pupils know how to keep safe at school and in the community

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Not all curriculum plans have appropriate sequencing of the key knowledge and skills. Some are not detailed or helpful to teachers. As a result, key knowledge is not always taught in an order that supports pupils with their learning. Leaders need to improve curriculum plans so that they are well sequenced, detailed and helpful to teachers.
- Some teachers do not have appropriate expectations of what pupils should achieve. This means they too often choose activities which do not support learning or engage pupils well. Leaders need to support teachers to develop their professional knowledge so the curriculum is taught well.
- Pupil passports too often do not contain specific detail to support pupils with SEND. Teachers do not consistently make helpful changes to their lessons. As a result, pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders need to ensure pupil passports are detailed and used well by staff.
- Staff across the school do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently well. Consequently, some pupils do not behave well, and some pupils and parents do not feel behaviour is dealt with fairly. Leaders need to ensure that the behaviour system is applied consistently and fairly by all.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139272
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10206177
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,425
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	196
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The trust board
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Bob Dool
<b>Principal</b>	Graham Horn
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.neale-wade.org">www.neale-wade.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 – 19 October 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Neale-Wade Academy is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school. It is part of the Active Learning trust.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils that attend the school is higher than the national average.
- The principal took up his position in September 2020.
- Three pupils are currently attending alternative provision at the Olive AP Academy – Nene Valley in Wisbech.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, governors and representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors explored the school's safeguarding culture through viewing safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and talking to safeguarding leaders.
- Inspectors considered the 96 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 80 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the 67 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and the 96 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

### **Inspection team**

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Adam Cooke	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sebastian Gasse	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Leonard	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector

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