

Neale-Wade Academy

Wimblington Road, March, Cambridgeshire PE15 9PX

Inspection dates

18–19 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved significantly since the previous inspection because of strong leadership at all levels.
- Subject and progress leaders feel well supported in being able to make a major contribution to raising standards in the school.
- The positive relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that learning is effective. Pupils behave sensibly when moving around the school.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is a rare occurrence. Vulnerable pupils are very well cared for.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge is a major contributor to the improvements made in the quality of teaching. Regular assessment of pupils' progress has been a key factor in ensuring that this is an improving school.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is typically good. Occasionally, a few pupils in Year 8 need reminding about adopting positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Pupils make good progress in this school from their different starting points. Disadvantaged pupils make similar or sometimes better progress than their peers nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- The most able pupils' progress is typically good, but teaching sometimes acts as a barrier to allowing these pupils to excel. This is because they are not given the opportunity to attempt tasks which are sufficiently challenging or to respond to questions which deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- A few subject areas do less well than others, including science and art.
- The well-planned curriculum meets pupils' needs well and ensures that they receive a broad and balanced education.
- The governing body has a clear understanding of its role and holds the school's leaders to account effectively for the quality of the provision.
- The sponsor has worked well with the school's leader and teachers to ensure that they have received some high-quality training.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are robust.
- The school's sixth form is good as a result of effective leadership and teaching. Students in the sixth form receive good-quality guidance and support. They attend school regularly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and pupils' outcomes to ensure that:
 - the most able pupils are given time to attempt the challenging tasks that already feature in teachers' planning
 - teachers use the information available on most-able pupils to target questioning more effectively so that these pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding
 - pupils make better progress in science and art.
- Eliminate the low-level disruptive behaviour that occurs in Year 8.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The skills of the executive principal and the head of school complement each other well. Together with the other members of the senior leadership team, they have accurately identified the right things to do to address the school's previously identified weaknesses. Hence, pupils' outcomes, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are now good.
- The heads of subject areas and the school's progress leaders have also played a key role in helping to move the school from one that requires improvement to a school that is now clearly good. These colleagues meet regularly to discuss pupils' progress and regularly monitor, evaluate and review the quality of their own work.
- The school's self-evaluation summary document realistically evaluates the school's current performance and inspectors agreed with its findings. Senior leaders use this document well to identify strategies to improve the school. The self-evaluation summary informs the content of the school improvement plan. Planned actions are appropriate and subject leaders use this approach to evaluate the quality of the areas for which they have responsibility.
- Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are supportive of what the school's leaders are aiming to achieve. The positive response to the staff questionnaire is also testament to the fact that the school's leaders have gained the respect of staff. Staff morale is high.
- Teaching is managed effectively. The school has identified a small number of lead practitioners who lead by example. These teachers provide helpful guidance and support to those who want to improve the quality of their teaching. They, along with senior and middle leaders, conduct regular observations of teaching. Weaker aspects observed are focused on quickly through timely training sessions.
- The quality of teaching over time is evaluated through a wide range of monitoring activities. These include learning walks; discussions about the impact of teaching on pupils' outcomes; and scrutiny of pupils' books.
- Teachers who are new to the school, whether newly qualified teachers or more experienced, receive a good induction when they arrive. The school has faced challenges in recruiting teachers, but actively seeks to recruit from abroad, including from Canada and Ireland, and has been successful in doing so.
- The school's comprehensive curriculum ensures that a wide range of subjects is on offer to meet pupils' needs. School leaders have deliberately chosen to steer a large number of pupils towards the English Baccalaureate, knowing that this has implications on the numbers who learn modern foreign languages and humanities. The curriculum is evaluated annually to make sure that it continues to be relevant to the pupils who are coming through the school.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have access to a wide range of clubs and activities which they enjoy. They have a very good understanding of fundamental British values. They know right from wrong, understand each other's differences well and demonstrate an in-depth understanding of democracy and the rule of the law.

- Additional funding received by the school is used well to improve outcomes for pupils. The impact of the pupil premium funding to target disadvantaged pupils is evaluated annually to ensure that only the most effective support strategies are used. These pupils make better progress than in the past due to well-targeted group work. The Year 7 catch-up funding has helped to improve pupils' reading skills. Funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well to ensure that this group of pupils makes good progress.
- The Active Learning Trust has been supportive of the school since its sponsorship began and demonstrates its belief in the school by delegating 96% of the budget directly to the local governing body. Regular contact takes place between the executive principal and the director of professional development through weekly meetings. The good practice that exists within the trust's other schools is shared regularly. The trust promotes high educational standards through its 'leading active learning' programme. This programme takes place over a 12-month period and, most importantly, aims to reflect school priorities and needs, as well as colleagues' own personal development and interests.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Following the previous inspection, it wisely created a standards sub-committee to monitor pupils' progress in the school. The vice-chair of the governing body, who also chairs this committee, identified its aim as 'seeking assurance rather than reassurance'.
- The governing body gathers pertinent information on the performance of different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who are looked after by the local authority. Case studies on individual pupils are used to assure the standards committee that these pupils are not falling behind.
- Rather than attach themselves to subject areas, the governors have chosen to scrutinise the impact of leaders' actions on improving all areas of the school's work. Governors take part in relevant monitoring activities as and when required. They have also commissioned two reviews of their effectiveness since the previous inspection and have acted swiftly on the findings.
- The governing body reviews all policies regularly to ensure that they are up to date, compliant with statutory requirements and accessible to all stakeholders through the school's website.
- Teachers' performance is managed well and governors ensure that performance targets relate directly to pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's single central record of recruitment checks of staff is fully compliant with current requirements. All staff have received up-to-date safeguarding training and have read the latest guidance entitled 'Keeping children safe in education', which came into force in September 2016.
- All staff have a good understanding of their role in keeping children safe. They demonstrate a sound understanding of how to recognise signs that a child might be a victim of domestic abuse or neglect. All staff have received 'Prevent' duty training, which aims to prevent young people from being drawn into terrorism. Inspectors'

scrutiny of pupils' files, including those subject to child protection, indicate that record-keeping is detailed and robust.

- The school's leaders maintain good communication with parents, carers and other external agencies to ensure the safety of pupils in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching in the school over time is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to sustain pupils' interest in lessons. They build on pupils' previous knowledge and make clear the purpose of the topic being taught. This enables pupils to see the relevance of each lesson.
- Teachers have a good understanding of the needs of different groups of pupils in the school and they use this effectively when planning for the content of their lessons.
- School leaders have chosen to adopt a common structure to lesson planning, which they believe ensures greater consistency. Lessons typically feature different levels of challenge with the aim of ensuring that all pupils make good progress.
- Pupils are assessed at regular times during the year using GCSE-type questions starting in Year 7. In preparation for these assessments, pupils practise activities that develop specific skills relevant to the subject in question. Subject teachers look to see that pupils are employing these skills when attempting the examination-style questions. Where gaps in knowledge are identified following teachers' marking, these are filled in through supplementary work in lessons.
- Teachers adhere well to the school's assessment policy, which requires pupils to evaluate their own work as well as that of their peers. Most pupils understand what they have to do to improve their work.
- Teachers' use of the information they glean from their assessments of pupils' work has helped to improve pupils' outcomes. Teaching is not yet outstanding because occasionally teachers allow the school's most able pupils to start at the same point as their less able peers. Consequently, some of the most able pupils do not have time to attempt the more challenging tasks their teachers have planned for them. This limits the progress that these pupils make. Sometimes, teachers expect all pupils to move on to the next stage of the lesson, without checking that everyone has understood.
- Teachers' use of questioning is typically skilful in checking that pupils understand what they are being taught. Occasionally, teachers do not always make the most effective use of the information they have on pupils' abilities and they do not pitch the questioning at such a level that the most able pupils are sufficiently stretched and challenged.
- Literacy and mathematical skills are taught well across a range of subjects. This is due to the fact that all subjects see it as their responsibility to develop these skills. Pupils enjoy reading and choose books which present a good degree of challenge. The most able pupils read with great fluency and are able to read for inference. The least able pupils make good use of their phonics skills to pronounce unknown words.
- The school's learning resource centre is used well to enhance teaching and make teaching an unforgettable experience for many classes. The centre manager regularly adapts the environment to bring learning to life. During the inspection, inspectors observed pupils empathising with children's experiences in Victorian slums. They read

detailed real-life experiences of these children's dreadful living conditions and then went on to actively seek out further information to write up their findings.

- Additional adults in the classroom work well with targeted pupils to help them understand for themselves what they are learning about.
- The quality of teaching of art and science has been less successful in ensuring consistently good outcomes for all pupils. However, leaders are aware of this and are taking appropriate action to address the issue.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe when in school. The school site is safe and secure and systems for signing in visitors are thorough.
- Pupils receive good, impartial careers advice. This is particularly important when pupils choose their subjects at the end of Year 9. They also develop a sound financial awareness which prepares them for later life. Inspectors observed pupils in Year 11 discussing the pros and cons of various sources of credit through a sharp analysis of case studies.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They demonstrate a good awareness of the risks associated with the use of the internet and social networking sites. The school's personal, social, health and economic curriculum covers a wide range of topics to ensure that they can assess the risks associated with situations in which they may find themselves outside school. Bullying is a rare occurrence, but when it does occur, pupils know what to do and are confident it will be dealt with.
- Vulnerable pupils told inspectors they feel the school supports their needs well and that there is always someone they can turn to if they need to talk about their problems. Displays around the school provide a constant reminder that some pupils face tougher challenges than others. For example, a display in the school foyer about young carers brings home to pupils that some pupils have much more to cope with at home than others.
- The school promotes equalities well and monitors pupil outcomes by the group they belong to. Pupils with protected characteristics feel comfortable in the school and are well supported. For example, the school, in collaboration with the sixth form, has set up an after-school group entitled 'Pride' aimed at pupils who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
- Pupils are offered a range of responsibilities in order to develop their leadership and promote their self-esteem. For example, all are eligible to become school ambassadors by accumulating points for being good role models to others.
- Transition from Year 6 to 7 is smooth because the school liaises well with the primary schools. Pupils get to know the school before starting Year 7 because they spend a week at Neal-Wade in order to get to grips with secondary school expectations. This means that when they start school in September, they can settle down to work and make good progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils move around the school sensibly and with purpose. They wear their uniform with pride and arrive at lessons on time and well equipped ready to start their work. They were particularly welcoming to the inspection team.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations with regard to behaviour in lessons and attitudes to learning. Good behaviour is actively encouraged and acknowledged by teachers.
- The school environment is respected by pupils. This is demonstrated by the lack of graffiti around the school, the good condition of the wall displays and the little if any litter dropped by pupils.
- The school's revised systems for managing unacceptable behaviour have led to a dramatic decrease in the number of recorded incidents. The closer monitoring of behavioural incidents and better involvement of parents has contributed towards this reduction. However, the number of recorded incidents of poor behaviour in Year 8 remains too high. This is why behaviour is not outstanding.
- Pupils' attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is an indicator of their enjoyment of coming to school. Overall attendance is now broadly in line with the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and of those who have special educational needs has improved year on year. This is due to the increased profile of the importance of regular attendance and how this links to achievement. Progress leaders have also contributed to this increase, as well as the attendance officer. Pupils are provided with opportunities to reflect on their levels of attendance during form time. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is decreasing steadily and is in line with the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils enter the school with levels of prior attainment which are below the national average. Overall achievement has improved since the previous inspection. Analysis of the 2016 provisional outcomes indicates that pupils performed well in the government's new performance accountability measure, called 'Progress 8'.
- Pupils have typically achieved well in English over the past few years from their different starting points, and this was the case in 2016. The proportion of pupils making good or better progress in mathematics has always been below that in English. This remains the case in 2016, but it has improved compared to previous years. In 2016, almost two thirds of pupils achieved at least a grade C in both English and mathematics. This is due to the high-quality teaching in English and to improvements in teaching in mathematics.
- There remains a little variation across subjects in how well pupils achieve. Pupils' performance in French and in computing improved somewhat compared to 2015, but pupils' outcomes in art remained disappointing. Outcomes in additional science also failed to meet the school's target in 2016, partly due to the quality of teaching, but also because teachers' forecasts were far too optimistic. Subject leaders have produced action plans which aim to ensure that outcomes in weaker subjects improve for future cohorts.

- The continuing improvements in pupils' outcomes are due to the school's improved use and analysis of data on pupils' progress and to the initiatives deployed based on these analyses. For example, the school arranged to transport a targeted group of pupils to school for early morning support in mathematics. Year 11 pupils also receive targeted support in English and mathematics during form time.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress did not match that of their non-disadvantaged peers nationally in 2016, but the differences in progress continue to diminish. Current information and scrutiny of pupils' books indicate that in some instances, disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers, if not better, or are catching up quickly. Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to provide small-group support, extra classes in English and mathematics, and a comprehensive support package for pupils who are looked after.
- The most able pupils achieve well in the school, including those who are disadvantaged. However, some teaching inhibits their progress to some extent because they are not always given access to the most challenging aspects of the work in the lesson.
- Inspection evidence indicates that pupils across all year groups, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least good progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils who completed Year 11 in 2016 nearly all progressed to either the school's sixth form, further education, or work-related training programmes. The proportion of pupils not in education, employment or training is below the national average.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Sixth form provision is good overall and leaders are ambitious for students who follow the 16 to 19 study programmes. This reflects the effective leadership evident among the school's sixth form team. This ambition has resulted in an improving picture of students' progress and attainment, as well as the number of students progressing to university for the first time in their families.
- Effective teaching and learning in the sixth form secures good progress. Teachers plan their lessons well, taking into account students' prior attainment, and plan lessons which meet the needs of students well.
- Students enter the sixth form with below-average key stage 4 outcomes and achieve in line with or above the national average when they leave the sixth form. This represents good progress.
- The proportion of students achieving A* to B grades at GCE A level increased from 34% in 2015 to 42% in 2016. This is as a result of teachers' careful planning for the needs of the most able students.
- In Year 13 in 2016 only fine art was significantly below the national average for the rate of progress made by students. In contrast, students' progress was significantly above average in pure mathematics, design and technology and business studies.
- Although progress for students who followed work-related courses dipped in 2015, this picked up again in 2016. This is due to teachers' constant reinforcement of high expectations and raising students' aspirations.

- Current students are making above-average progress in most subjects in Year 13. This view is supported by inspectors' scrutiny of students' work and the school's records of the quality of teaching over time in the sixth form.
- Courses on offer in the sixth form curriculum are reviewed regularly to ensure that they meet the school's aim to offer a fully inclusive curriculum. The school ensured that all students who did not achieve a grade C in English and/or mathematics achieved a pass in 2015, although a smaller proportion were successful in achieving a pass grade in mathematics in 2016.
- Leaders provide a strong programme of careers information, advice and guidance in the sixth form. Consequently, students make better choices when selecting their courses and are more suitably qualified when applying to university, which now includes more of the prestigious universities. Their programmes of study prepare them well for the world of work and for life in modern Britain. Because the programmes of study are well considered for each student, retention rates are high. Students act as positive role models to younger pupils and willingly take on roles of responsibility to work alongside pupils in younger year groups.
- Leaders ensure that students in the sixth form know how to stay safe. They are well prepared for coping with the pressures of being in the sixth form, and receive good-quality counselling and guidance on how to cope with stress and other mental health related issues. Sixth form students attend school regularly.

School details

Unique reference number	139272
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10021074

This inspection of the school 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 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,398
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Pugh
Executive Principal	Jason Wing
Telephone number	01354 606 000
Website	www.neale-wade.org
Email address	skerr@neale-wade.org
Date of previous inspection	3 February 2015

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish on their website.
- Neale-Wade Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It is sponsored by the Active Learning Trust.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- An above-average proportion of disadvantaged pupils attend the school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan is above the national average.

- The school does not make use of any off-site training.
- The executive principal also provides strategic leadership to Burrowmoor Primary School, as well as offering support to a number of other schools sponsored by the trust.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 47 lessons, sometimes accompanied by senior leaders. They also conducted more brief visits to lessons alone to focus on pupils' behaviour. Inspectors looked at pupils' books across a range of subjects and year groups.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject and progress leaders, groups of pupils, the vice-chair of the governing body and a representative from the trust. The lead inspector also conducted a telephone call with a parent.
- Inspectors scrutinised school improvement documents; policies; information on pupils' progress; records of the quality of teaching; and information on pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered 101 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 101 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

John Daniell, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sally Garrett	Ofsted Inspector
Paul O'Shea	Ofsted Inspector
David Davies	Ofsted Inspector
John Craig	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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