

Inspection of a good school: Northampton Academy

Wellingborough Road, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN3 8NH

Inspection dates:

12–13 November 2019

Outcome

Northampton Academy continues to be a good school.

There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a section 5 inspection now.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are highly enthusiastic about attending this school. They work extremely well with their teachers, who help them to aim high and work hard. The school's high expectation of 'learning without disruption' is reflected in exemplary behaviour.

Pupils are inspired by the broad range of subjects they study. They benefit from a thoughtfully designed curriculum. They achieve highly. They appreciate the wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Pupils gain leadership skills every year through carefully planned activities. For example, they become anti-bullying ambassadors and serve on the student council. The school's strongly held values of respect, determination and ambition help them to reflect on and develop their character. Character development is at the heart of the school's work.

Pupils feel very safe in this school. They told us that bullying is extremely rare. They appreciate the support and encouragement they receive from all teachers. Pupils say that teachers help them to overcome any difficulties to learning they may face. All pupils feel included in the school community and believe they can contribute to its future.

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

Subject leaders have carefully planned what to teach pupils and in what order. They have checked that these plans are used consistently well. Lessons help pupils to understand new concepts quickly. For example, pupils in key stage 3 learn about life in medieval and Renaissance times. Pupils in Year 10 build on this when they learn about the history of medicine. Pupils are eager to learn. They have high expectations of themselves and are consistently motivated by high-quality teaching.

Teachers check that pupils have understood new concepts before they move onto more challenging work. Pupils find that the quizzes and regular tests, for example, help them to

remember more. They can also identify what they need to do to improve. Expectations are consistently high. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They explain important vocabulary well. Pupils understand and use these words with accuracy. They talk with confidence about what they are learning.

Leaders and teachers promote exceptionally well the importance of reading. In the lessons that we saw, those pupils who read aloud did so with confidence and expression. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the help that they need. This enables them to access more challenging work and achieve well. They also take part in the extra-curricular activities.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is highly ambitious. This has improved the breadth of qualifications that pupils study for. For example, more pupils are studying a language to GCSE. However, design and technology subjects are not currently catered for sufficiently well in all year groups. Leaders have taken decisive action to improve the quality of education in this subject area.

Some pupils follow a different curriculum. They spend more time learning about science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). Pupils enjoy this focused approach. They told inspectors it will help them to fulfil their career ambitions. Leaders want pupils to aim high and know more about a wider range of further studies and occupations. For example, they receive a series of lectures from universities.

Sixth-form students are well supported. They say that teachers are always available to help them. This includes during time outside lessons. Students feel that teachers care about their well-being. Leaders prepare students well to apply for different courses. For example, leaders organise appropriate work experience for students applying to study medicine. They help them to prepare for interviews.

Leaders want pupils to develop strong personal values of determination, respect and ambition. They have planned a curriculum to develop pupils' character. Pupils demonstrate the school's values through their excellent and thoughtful behaviours.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders create a strong culture of vigilance. They do all that they can to keep students safe. Leaders work well with external agencies and are tenacious in ensuring that pupils have the help and support they need when required. This includes access to a trained counsellor. Leaders understand the risks young people may face and ensure that the 'character' curriculum helps them to make safe choices.

Teachers receive the training they need to identify whether a pupil may be at risk. All staff understand their responsibilities if they have any concerns about a child, however small. The record-keeping for pupil referrals and necessary employment checks is exemplary.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders should ensure that their plans for design and technology to be a full part of the school's curriculum are implemented swiftly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2013.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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're 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

Unique reference number	134814
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10110122
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 sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,496
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	208
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Mr Michael George
Headteacher	Mr Nat Parnell
Website	http://www.northampton-academy.org
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2016

Information about this school

- Northampton Academy is part of the United Learning Trust. It joined in January 2004.
- The school uses some alternative provision. Currently, very few pupils attend Progress Schools and The CE Academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including those responsible for behaviour, special educational needs and/or disabilities and the curriculum.
- An inspector also met with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the trust.
- Inspectors considered the 63 responses from parents to the Parent View survey and the school's own survey results from staff and students.

- The subjects that were considered in depth as part of this inspection were English, mathematics, science and history. In each subject, inspectors met with the subject leader, visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and met with pupils and teachers.
- In addition, an inspector met with pupils who are part of the STEM provision and a group of sixth-form students. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour around the school site.
- Inspectors met with those responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised their record-keeping and relevant policies and procedures.

Inspection team

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