

Felixstowe Academy

High Street, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9QR

Inspection dates

14–15 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and carers and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, do not make adequate progress by the time they sit their GCSE examinations. Too many pupils have not received an acceptable standard of education over time.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 4 has been significantly below that of other pupils nationally for a number of years.
- Outcomes for pupils are below the government's floor standards. The proportion who achieved a standard pass at GCSE was significantly below that found nationally in 2017.
- There has been a culture of bullying at the school which has not been dealt with effectively. Some pupils do not feel safe at school and do not report issues to adults.
- Exclusion rates are too high.
- Too many parents who responded to Parent View have lost faith in the school's ability to deal effectively with issues of bullying.
- Too many pupils are persistently absent from school.
- Leaders and governors have an overly optimistic view of the school's performance. This hinders their ability to prioritise areas in need of immediate attention. Consequently, leaders are not demonstrating sufficient capacity to bring about improvement.
- The support provided by the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) has been ineffective in helping the school to improve since the previous inspection.
- Very recent changes have brought about some improvements to the quality of teaching, but a diet of poor-quality teaching over time has resulted in pupils making inadequate progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Students in the sixth form make good progress from their starting points. They take advantage of the opportunities open to them and value the support that they receive.
- Recent changes to the school's governance and the appointment of a new chair of governors have now strengthened the school's leadership.
- The principal is tackling underperformance robustly. He has recently successfully completed a useful restructuring of the leadership teams.
- Many pupils are polite and well behaved and want to do well. They are keen for their school to improve.
- Newly qualified teachers are supported well.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' personal development and welfare by:
 - ensuring that there are robust systems in place to deal effectively with bullying
 - promoting a culture where all pupils feel safe
 - providing timely, regular and effective instruction on the impact of all forms of bullying so that pupils are confident in reporting concerns to adults
 - ensuring that all issues of bullying are dealt with promptly and consistently, in line with clear and robust policies.
- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - increasing the progress that disadvantaged pupils make so that they perform at least as well as all other pupils nationally
 - developing effective strategies to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities so that they make progress that is at least similar to all pupils nationally with the same starting points
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is consistently good and that adults have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - accelerating the pace of school improvement by embedding clear and systematic monitoring of the impact of leaders' work on the progress that pupils make
 - developing effective strategies to reduce rates of pupils' absence, persistent absence and fixed-term exclusions, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - restoring positive relationships with parents so that they have confidence in the school's leadership.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have not ensured that pupils make the progress that they should. In recent years, pupils' progress has been significantly below average. The unvalidated GCSE results for 2017 show that pupils' progress was well below average and will not meet the government's minimum floor standards.
- Leaders do not respond effectively to pupils' and parents' concerns about bullying. The school's systems for recording bullying do not systematically ensure that incidents of bullying have been resolved. Some pupils say that they no longer report bullying incidents because they do not feel that staff take their concerns seriously. Some pupils say that there are areas in the school where they do not feel safe.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, do not have a positive view of the school. More than half of respondents do not feel that the school is well led and managed or that staff respond to their concerns. Almost two thirds of the respondents would not recommend the school to another parent.
- The principal and other school leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Current evaluations of the school's performance are overly positive and are not based upon a wide enough range of appropriate and relevant information.
- The curriculum now offers pupils the opportunity to study a wider range of academic subjects than previously. GCSE 'pathways' have been developed to ensure that pupils can study a broad and appropriate suite of qualifications at key stage 4.
- Although there is a programme in place to coordinate the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, it has had a limited impact on the way that some pupils treat each other.
- Leaders' use of the additional funding they receive for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is having a limited impact on the progress these pupils make. Funding is matched to the needs of each identified pupil, but pupils are not always supported effectively in lessons.
- Senior leaders use pupil premium funding to provide a wide variety of support for eligible pupils. Their evaluations show that some of these strategies are having a positive impact. However, disadvantaged pupils' progress has been well below average for the previous three years, and currently remains so.
- The Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding has been used appropriately to support pupils' transition to secondary school.
- Leaders acknowledge that the school's development stalled last year as a consequence of both the absence of some senior leaders and the lack of strategies to eradicate underperformance. The principal has recently restructured the senior and middle leadership teams. He has introduced more robust systems for holding leaders and teachers to account. New leaders are appreciative of the enhanced support and professional development they are now receiving.
- Leaders are now taking strong action to tackle weak teaching, and the overall quality

of teaching is improving from a very low starting point. Teaching is still too variable in quality between and within subjects.

- Leaders have recently established a more effective system of professional development for teachers. Training is now tailored to teachers' specific needs. This is beginning to lead to improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Performance management systems have now been strengthened, with staff targets sensibly aligned with whole-school priorities.
- As a result of leaders' recently improved training provision, and the new plans for increased support from the trust, it is recommended that newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

Governance of the school

- Governors are dedicated and passionate about the school. They understand the key areas where the school has been underperforming. However, they have been ineffective in holding leaders to account to improve pupils' progress.
- Governors have not effectively monitored the spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Support from the AET has not been effective in improving pupils' achievement. As a consequence, the school is now being closely monitored by the regional schools commissioner.
- Very recent changes to the school's and the trust's governance structures are positive and have clarified the responsibilities of both groups. The trust's regional director will become chair of governors. He has a wealth of experience and has a clear and accurate understanding of the school. The new structure is more streamlined and draws upon the additional experience of 'peer principals' from across the trust.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Pupils have little confidence in the school's ability to tackle bullying successfully. They say that bullying is widespread and there are areas of the school where they do not feel safe.
- Leaders have not ensured that their systems are effective at tackling bullying. There is no systematic follow-up monitoring of the well-being of victims of bullying to check that situations have improved.
- Around half of parents who responded to Parent View feel that leaders do not deal with bullying effectively. Over a third said that their child does not feel safe at school.
- Staff are suitably trained in child protection. They understand the signs to consider and report concerns appropriately. Leadership of child protection is effective. There are clear processes in place and external agencies are used effectively when required. Records are well kept.
- The record of statutory checks leaders make when recruiting staff to work with pupils is now compliant. At the time of the inspection, there were some administrative errors

and some checks that had not been completed. These were rectified during the course of the inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has been too inconsistent over a long period of time and, as a result, pupils have not made adequate progress. Disadvantaged pupils, in particular, do not make sufficient progress from their starting points. There are very recent improvements in the overall quality of teaching but is too early to see the impact that leaders' plans are having on improving pupils' progress and achievement.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are mixed and, while sometimes their expectations are high, too often they are too low. Consequently, some pupils do not find the work challenging and they do not achieve as well as they should. When teachers successfully communicate high expectations, learning in lessons flows well and pupils work hard to achieve.
- The quality of teachers' questioning to check pupils' understanding is inconsistent. Some teachers do not notice, or correct, pupils' misconceptions. Teachers move on to the next part of the lesson without knowing whether pupils' understanding is secure. When questioning is effective, teachers are able to match learning activities more closely to pupils' needs so they can achieve well.
- Often, teachers' planning does not take sufficient account of what pupils already know and can do. In these lessons, teachers accept a lower standard of work completed by pupils and do not strive to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Where teaching is weak, teachers do not deal effectively with low-level disruption and there is little variation or challenge in learning activities to take into account the abilities of pupils. This was supported by discussions with pupils. Pupils consider that teaching is more effective when they have a positive relationship with their teacher.
- Where teaching is strong, teachers' subject knowledge and passion for their subject inspire pupils. In these lessons, pupils are highly motivated, ask challenging questions and have high aspirations. Their work shows that they make good progress over time.
- The most effective teaching ensures that pupils receive helpful advice about how to improve their work. Pupils appreciate individual feedback and they value the time and support that they are given.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Many pupils feel that bullying is commonplace at the school and that it is not dealt with effectively. Pupils' comments included 'Sometimes I am so scared that I cannot go to school' and 'There are some areas (in school) where I don't feel safe.'
- Parents share the concerns raised by pupils about bullying. Comments from parents include 'Bullying is not taken seriously and is brushed under the carpet', 'Bullying is rife

and not dealt with at all', 'Bullying is not addressed' and 'The way the school deals with bullying is appalling.'

- Leaders do not systematically check that reported instances of bullying have been resolved. Leaders' records show that there are low and decreasing numbers of bullying incidents within school. These figures are not supported by comments from pupils and parents. Some pupils say that they do not report incidents of bullying because they have lost faith in the school's ability to deal with it. Leaders acknowledge that systems need to improve.
- Recently, school leaders held a safety week where a number of external speakers addressed pupils regarding the impact of bullying. While events such as these are effective, incidents of bullying are part of the culture at Felixstowe Academy. Consequently, not enough is done regularly to ensure that adults act consistently and deal with issues effectively.
- The school has recently changed its provider of off-site alternative provision and it has effective systems in place to monitor the personal development and welfare of its pupils who attend it.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Overall, absence and persistent absence of pupils are above average. The absence and persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils are well above average.
- Where work is well matched to the abilities of pupils, conduct in lessons is good. However, this is not consistent across all lessons and year groups.
- Many pupils work hard, respect their teachers and take their learning seriously. They are friendly and courteous and are excellent ambassadors for the school.
- When teaching fails to captivate pupils, the low-level disruption caused by a minority of pupils hampers the learning of others.
- During the inspection, behaviour at break and lunchtimes was positive in the busy school canteen. There was a high staff presence and pupils sat together and enjoyed their social time. Behaviour outside was less calm and incidents of poor behaviour were not consistently challenged.
- The proportion of pupils that have been excluded from school has remained consistently above average over the last three years.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are below average, but they make poor progress during their time at school, and so standards by the end of key stage 4 are low. In 2016, pupils achieved, on average, a third of a grade lower than their peers nationally. In 2017, this figure worsened and pupils performed over half a grade lower than pupils with similar starting points nationally.
- The unvalidated GCSE results for 2017 saw less than half of all pupils achieving standard passes in both English and mathematics, while only a quarter of all pupils

achieved strong passes in both subjects. The school did not meet the government's minimum floor standards for pupils' progress.

- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is inadequate. In both 2016 and 2017, disadvantaged pupils performed, on average, over a grade lower than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. There is no convincing evidence that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress this year.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have previously made much less progress than pupils with similar starting points nationally. Although there was an improvement in the progress of this group of pupils in 2017, their rate of progress was still slow. Currently, the progress these pupils make remains a concern.
- Pupils' progress across a wide range of subjects is mixed and the performance of pupils in individual subjects is inconsistent. For example, in Years 9 and 10, pupils are performing an average of a grade lower in mathematics than they are in English.
- Leaders believe that the progress of current pupils is now improving and that results will improve significantly in 2018. Evidence from pupils' books demonstrates that, in some subjects, pupils are beginning to make better progress than in the past. However, inspectors did not see sufficient evidence to support leaders' claims. Leaders' predictions for 2017 were very inaccurate and current assessment processes are not robust enough.
- The proportion of pupils who move on to employment, education or training is high.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form is more effective than the main school because students make good progress in both academic and vocational subjects.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers' comprehensive subject knowledge and effective planning result in students making increasingly good progress.
- Leaders of the sixth form have an accurate understanding of its strengths. They are proactive in tackling underperformance and their actions have a positive impact upon students' progress.
- Students' progress in academic and vocational subjects has been broadly in line with the national average in recent years and is improving. Variations in students' performance in individual subjects are narrowing.
- Disadvantaged students' performance is in line with that of their non-disadvantaged classmates.
- Students who have not achieved a good pass in GCSE English or mathematics are supported effectively to gain these qualifications.
- Strong teaching challenges students' thinking. Teachers involve students in high-level discussions that refine their understanding of key concepts and enable them to make links across different topics. Teaching is less effective when students lack the confidence to take risks and make mistakes.
- Careers advice and guidance are effective. Students are supported to make appropriate course choices when they join the sixth form and, as a consequence, the proportion of

students moving to sustained employment, education or training at the end of their studies is in line with the national average.

- Students have positive attitudes to learning. They work hard in lessons and they contribute to the wider life of both the sixth form and the main school. Students spoke positively about the wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities that are on offer to them and of the individualised support that they receive from sixth-form staff.

School details

Unique reference number	137321
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10036272

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 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,221
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	105
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	John King
Principal	Anthony Williams
Telephone number	01394 288 228
Website	http://felixstoweacademy.org/
Email address	office@felixstoweacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	2–3 June 2015

Information about this school

- This school is a sponsored academy within the AET. The AET regional educational adviser for East England and London is also the school's chair of governors.
- The school uses Suffolk New College for its alternative education provision.
- The school does not meet the current government floor standards.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included observing pupils learning in a number of lessons, some of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum and pastoral leaders, recently qualified teachers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the AET.
- The inspectors examined a range of documentation around safeguarding pupils and scrutinised the single central register of employment checks for staff.
- Inspectors considered the arrangements for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Inspectors undertook general observations of the daily operations of the school, including registration periods, breaktimes and lesson changeovers.
- Parents' views were taken from the 170 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, together with 122 comments from parents' free-text responses. A telephone conversation with a parent was also evaluated.
- There were no staff responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire.
- There were no responses to the Ofsted online pupil questionnaire. Inspectors gathered their views through informal conversations, a number of meetings with different groups of pupils and an examination of a pupil survey provided by leaders.

Inspection team

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David Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Pemberton	Ofsted Inspector
Rob James	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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