

The Newark Academy

London Road, Balderton, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 3AL

Inspection dates

9–10 July 2019

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Outstanding |
| 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 | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- From a very low starting point, leaders and governors have established a school where only the highest expectations of staff and pupils will do. Because of this, teaching, behaviour and achievement have improved considerably. Leadership and management are outstanding.
- Leadership at all levels is now very strong. Leaders are committed to improving the school further. The challenge and support from the school's sponsor, Nova Education Trust, is excellent.
- Staff look after pupils well. School staff support pupils to strive to reach their academic and personal potential.
- Pupils behave well. They enjoy coming to school. Their attendance is good. A minority of pupils lack the confidence they need to take part fully in discussions.
- Since the school opened, the quality of teaching has improved greatly. Teaching is now good in most subjects. In history and modern foreign languages, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress has varied over time.
- Most teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They use their skills well to support pupils' learning.
- Overall, pupils' attainment is similar to the national average. Pupils make strong progress in English and mathematics. They make good progress in all science subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Their achievements are approaching those of other pupils nationally.
- The most able pupils make strong progress. In the past, low-ability pupils, and some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), made less progress than their peers. Improved leadership and teaching have started to strengthen the progress of both groups of pupils.
- Pupils study a broad, balanced and well-planned curriculum. They learn the value of tolerance and respect. Pupils are well prepared to be good citizens of modern Britain.
- The school's small sixth form meets students' academic needs well. Staff encourage sixth-form students to aim high. Students, however, have a limited range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- The school's careers programme meets government requirements. Some parts of the programme, however, are less effective than others. Not all pupils go on work experience placements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders improve the quality of the curriculum by ensuring that:
 - teaching is consistently strong in all subjects, particularly history and modern foreign languages
 - all pupils make equally strong progress, particularly those pupils with SEND
 - there is a rich careers education provision available for all pupils
 - pupils develop their self-confidence and resilience, so that they all take part fully in class discussions
 - students' sixth-form experience improves further by expanding their extra-curricular options.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leadership is outstanding. Leaders and governors have had a powerful impact on the quality of education at the school. When the school opened, staff morale and community trust were extremely low. In under three years, leaders have transformed the school. It is now a place where ambition thrives. Leaders celebrate pupils' achievements well. They have created a culture of high aspirations for all. Through painstaking work, leaders have regained the community's trust. The school is now oversubscribed, and the roll is rising quickly.
- Leaders are determined that the significant progress achieved so far is the beginning, not the end, of the school's improvement journey. Their plans for further improvement are incisive and realistic. The headteacher is very committed to continually raising pupils' achievement. All school leaders share his vision of a high-achieving school. This unity of purpose gives the school great capacity for further improvement. Leaders' work so far has improved pupils' behaviour, their achievements and the quality of teaching.
- The executive principal ably supports the headteacher. The impact of the work of the school's sponsors, Nova Education Trust, has been considerable. The trust has equipped the school's leaders and governors with the skills and confidence they needed to do their jobs effectively. The multi-academy trust has also brought the school into a vibrant learning community, where teachers across different schools are able to share ideas and plan together. This has had a positive impact on teaching and assessment.
- Improvements in teaching have been very well led. Leaders have introduced an effective coaching programme. All leaders spend at least half of their time on improving the quality of teaching. The multi-academy trust has supported the school by ensuring that aspects of school management, such as premises development, do not dominate leaders' time. This has freed leaders to concentrate on the quality of pupils' education.
- Staff morale is very high. Teachers appreciate the effective, high-quality support they receive for their professional development. Overwhelmingly, staff used the Ofsted staff questionnaire to tell inspectors how proud they were to work at the school. Staff recognise the extent of the school's improvements to date. They are pleased to be a part of this work. Staff also told inspectors that they appreciated leaders' efforts to reduce their workload.
- Pupils study a well-thought-through curriculum. The content of the curriculum offers support and challenge to all pupils. Steadily increasing numbers of pupils are taking all the English Baccalaureate qualifications, though teacher recruitment difficulties have slowed down the pace of this change. A wide range of exciting extra-curricular activities is available for pupils aged 11 to 16. These opportunities support pupils' personal development well.
- Through personal, social and health education, pupils learn to respect each other and to be tolerant. They have a good understanding of the importance of modern British values. Leaders convey their enthusiasm for social justice to pupils. Inspectors repeatedly heard staff telling pupils to 'do the right thing'. Pupils learn to think about the impact of their actions on others. The school's motto 'Work hard, Be kind' is

emblazoned on the school's central staircase, as a reminder of this community value. Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

- Leaders make effective use of the extra funding the government gives to support some pupils. School leaders use Year 7 catch-up funding well to improve pupils' reading and numeracy skills. Leaders' use of the pupil premium provides extra teaching to help disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Through strengthened leadership, additional funding to support pupils with SEND is now having a positive impact on their progress. School leaders are using some of this money to fund higher-level teaching assistants.

Governance of the school

- The multi-academy trust delegates a range of duties to the local governing body. The trustees, however, are mindful of their overall accountability for the school. They oversee the work of leaders and local governors very carefully. There are regular checks in place to support the trust's overview. The minutes of trustees' meetings make it clear that they use these systems well.
- Governors have a wide range of skills which they use well. These skills help them fulfil their legal responsibilities in key areas, such as safeguarding and the curriculum. Since the school opened, governors have developed their understanding of school performance information. They now have a precise understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Governors support and challenge leaders very well. They are well informed about the school. Governors make regular visits to check that all is well. They speak to pupils, to ask them about their experience of school. They want to know personally that pupils are happy and learning well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture that puts pupils' needs first. They work well with other agencies and parents and carers to support pupils in times of need.
- School leaders' electronic record-keeping systems are highly effective. Leaders' records show that staff are vigilant in reporting concerns. Senior leaders respond to staff concerns promptly, so that pupils who need help get it quickly.
- The multi-academy trust carefully audits the school's safeguarding arrangements. The trust makes sure that the school responds speedily to any small areas for improvement.
- Leaders' support for the school's most vulnerable pupils, including children looked after, has been exemplary. Parents and carers contacted inspectors directly to tell us about the high standard of care very vulnerable pupils had received.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved markedly. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. The quality of teaching is good in most subjects. Teaching continues to get better.

- Most teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use their understanding well to improve pupils' learning. In geography, for example, inspectors observed teachers with expert subject knowledge. Teachers used this expertise to ask probing questions. Pupils' books showed that they had high-level geographical knowledge for their ages.
- Teachers make effective use of the assessments they make of pupils' work. The school works closely with other schools across the academy trust to make sure that teachers' assessments are accurate and well used. This helps teachers plan well for pupils' needs. This approach is particularly effective in mathematics.
- Teachers use rewards well to motivate pupils in lessons. Pupils, for example, vie for the honour of being 'star pupil' in every lesson. This friendly competition helps to make learning fun.
- Teachers focus closely on developing pupils' literacy skills. For example, teachers continually stress the importance of a wide vocabulary to achieving highly. This approach is having a positive impact on pupils' attainment. In English, for example, key stage 3 pupils confidently used complex terms such as 'semantic field' and 'extended metaphor' in their writing about poetry.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are positive about the quality of teaching at the school. Most responses to the questionnaire completed during the inspection showed that parents and carers feel well informed about their child's progress.
- Over time, teaching in history and modern foreign languages has been less effective than elsewhere. Leaders have reviewed the content of the curriculum and how teachers deliver it. Their plans are now securing improvements in the quality of teaching in these subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are happy at school. They told inspectors there is always an adult they can talk to if they have a problem. School staff, including the non-teaching pastoral staff, care for pupils well. High-quality support means that pupils get any help they need. This lets pupils concentrate on their studies.
- Inspectors saw effective teaching which helped pupils learn about the dangers of extremism. Pupils had a good understanding of the causes of extremism. They knew how to protect themselves from this type of exploitation.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying was rare. They knew exactly what to do if another pupil tried to bully them. Pupils were confident that staff would deal with any bullying issues quickly.
- The school shares an off-site unit, MAPLE, for pupils with emotional or behavioural needs. Pupils who attend MAPLE respond well to this support. Often, they make greater progress at MAPLE than they had in the main school. Pupils' attendance also tends to improve at the

centre. Pupils using other alternative provision also gain from learning in a different setting. School staff monitor the welfare carefully of all pupils being educated off-site.

- 'Student leaders' act as role models to others. They promote high aspirations and democratic values. Many of the school's pupils are socially self-confident. They mix well together during breaks. However, some pupils find it more difficult to speak up and share their ideas in lessons. This makes it difficult for them to get fully involved in their schoolwork.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a pleasant atmosphere at the school. Pupils conduct themselves well around the school site. They are punctual to lessons. Leaders' well-established routines help ensure good order. Inspectors saw no disruptive behaviour of any kind in lessons. Pupils had consistently positive attitudes to learning.
- The school's behaviour policy is effective. Staff use the policy consistently in classrooms and around school. Teachers firmly apply the school rules. Pupils see this as fair, even when they do not like the consequences.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. Leaders have reduced the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school.
- Exclusions have fallen significantly since the school opened. Leaders exclude a smaller proportion of pupils from school compared to the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are absent and excluded more than other pupils. Leaders are supporting effectively these pupils to attend regularly. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND excluded from school is falling.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, pupils' attainment and progress were similar to national averages at the end of key stage 4.
- Current pupils are making good progress in all key stages and in most subjects. However, they do not achieve as well in modern foreign languages and history.
- In English and mathematics, pupils are making consistently strong progress in all years. The curriculum in both subjects is very well planned and delivered. Inspectors saw many examples in pupils' workbooks of the demanding tasks they had completed. In lessons, inspectors saw teachers supporting pupils effectively, so that they understood challenging topics. As a result, pupils are developing strong subject knowledge and attaining well in English and mathematics.
- Formerly, pupils' progress in science at key stage 4 depended on the science course they chose. The quality of teaching in science is now consistently good. Pupils are now making good progress in all science subjects and courses.
- In the past, disadvantaged pupils made weaker progress than other pupils nationally. They now have effective extra support that is helping them to catch up, particularly in mathematics, English and science. This support includes additional teaching to make sure disadvantaged pupils understand the topics that they cover in lessons.

Disadvantaged pupils' progress is now good and, as a result, their attainment is improving.

- As a result of challenging teaching, the most able pupils in the school are making strong progress. Middle-ability pupils make good progress in most subjects. The impact of teaching on low-ability pupils' progress has been less successful over time. The school has some highly skilled teachers who are now coaching others to meet the needs of low-ability pupils more effectively. The progress of these pupils is starting to improve.
- Most pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points. Teachers work closely with higher-level teaching assistants to provide these pupils with effective support. However, the progress of the least able pupils with SEND remains inconsistent.
- Overall, pupils are well prepared for education or employment. Almost all Year 11 pupils, for example, went on to appropriate education or training placements. The school's careers education plan covers all government requirements. Currently, however, some pupils do not find work experience placements at key stage 4, which means they have a gap in their careers education. In addition, a small number of pupils told inspectors that they would have liked more careers information at key points during their time at school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The school's small sixth form is good. Student numbers are growing. Around half of the outgoing Year 11 intend to stay on into the school's sixth form. Although the school currently offers a limited range of subjects, these options suit students' abilities and interests well. Students told inspectors that they were glad the sixth form had re-opened. They said they had 'fought for the right to study here'. All students who spoke to inspectors said they were enjoying the sixth form.
- Leaders' aspirations for sixth-form students are high. Students told inspectors that they were determined to reach the highest grades. Academic and applied courses are equally effective. Students are currently making good progress towards ambitious goals in all subjects on offer.
- Almost all students in Year 12 intend to return to complete their studies next year. However, they have already begun to think about life after the sixth form. Most intend to go on to university. Post-16 careers education includes informative higher education advice and visits. Students are also well informed about other options they might have, such as apprenticeships.
- All sixth-form students take meaningful work experience. Those students taking vocational courses have extended work placements. Work experience contributes well to students' study programmes.
- Sixth-form teaching is strong, including in English and mathematics. Students can continue developing their skills in English and mathematics through either A level or GCSE courses. Teaching prepares students well for future examinations.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. The recently appointed head of the sixth form is already planning for the rapid expansion of the 16 to 19 study programmes in

September. She is determined that the quality of the sixth form will remain high as numbers and options grow.

- Sixth-form students behave impeccably. They are great ambassadors for the school. Students are punctual. Most students have good attendance.
- Staff care for sixth-form students well. During 'crew time', the sixth-form pastoral lessons, students explore the dilemmas that they are likely to face as young adults. They also have opportunities to feel part of school life. For example, through helping in lower-school lessons. Currently, however, there is a narrow range of age-appropriate enrichment options available in the sixth form.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 144489 |
| Local authority | Nottinghamshire County Council |
| Inspection number | 10107639 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| 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 | 765 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 16 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Elaine Rossall |
| Headteacher | Andrew Seymour |
| Telephone number | 01636 615000 |
| Website | www.newarkacademy.co.uk |
| Email address | office@newarkacademy.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school opened in October 2016.
- The school's sixth form began accepting new students in September 2018.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from White British backgrounds is above the national average.

- Nova Education Trust sponsor the school. The trust provides a broad range of support. The trustees delegate a range of functions to the local governing body. Local governors make checks on the day-to-day running of the school, especially teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' progress. The executive principal helps manage the relationship between trustees and local governors.
- The school uses Hill Holt Wood, Acorn Free School and Nisai Learning for external alternative provision.
- The school has an off-site unit, MAPLE, which caters for up to 20 key stage 4 pupils. This facility is shared with Magnus Church of England Academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school and in a range of subjects. Many lessons were observed jointly with school leaders. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to lessons to evaluate pupils' progress and behaviour in classrooms.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books, during lessons and at other times during the inspection.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders, the executive principal, members of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust.
- An inspector visited the school's off-site unit for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, the school's complaints records, minutes of governing body meetings, minutes of the multi-academy trust's meetings and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors looked at the 113 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 104 free-text responses from parents and carers. Inspectors also considered a letter and an email sent from parents and carers.
- The inspection team listened to the views of pupils in key stage 3, key stage 4 and the sixth form, during meetings, in classrooms and around the school. Inspectors also considered the 17 pupil survey responses.
- Inspectors considered the views of 72 members of staff who completed Ofsted questionnaires.

Inspection team

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| Ellenor Beighton, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Laurence Reilly | Ofsted Inspector |
| Anne White | Ofsted Inspector |
| Javier Sanchez-Garcia | Ofsted Inspector |

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