

# Aylsham High School

Sir Williams Lane, Aylsham, Norwich, Norfolk NR11 6AN

## Inspection dates

15–16 October 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides inspired leadership. Supported by an effective leadership team, he has brought about significant improvements to the school. High expectations result in good teaching and achievement.
- Behaviour of students is outstanding. Students' excellent attitudes to learning mean they make the best of their opportunities at the school.
- Actions to keep students safe are outstanding. Students say there is no bullying. Parents believe children are safe and happy.
- Students are punctual. Attendance is above the national average. Students enjoy coming to school.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are planned well to interest and challenge students. Teaching in practical subjects is particularly strong.
- High levels of tolerance and respect are the norm. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well.
- Students join the school in Year 7 with average skills. GCSE results are well above average at the end of Year 11. Students make good progress.
- Students make outstanding and good progress in GCSE English and mathematics respectively. Business and enterprise are a strength of the school.
- Achievement is good in geography, history, science, the creative and performing arts.
- The achievement of students on work related courses is good and improving.
- Students actively take on leadership roles within the school. Such experiences provide good foundations for a future in today's Britain.
- Governors are effective and perceptive. They know the school's strengths. They hold school leaders to account ensuring the quality of teaching and students' achievement are good and improving.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students who are supported through pupil-premium funding do not achieve as well as other students with the same starting points in school and all students nationally.
- Feedback teachers give to students to help them improve their work is not as good as it could be.
- Subject leaders do not check that assessment is used consistently well by all teachers to support students' learning and accelerate their progress.

### Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons or parts of lessons to gain a picture of how well students are learning over time. Some lessons were seen with members of the school's leadership team.
- Inspectors examined a number of school documents, including the policies, school improvement plan, minutes of meetings and tracking systems used for checking students' progress. Documents relating to safeguarding students and behaviour were also reviewed.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other staff. A meeting was held with the Chair of the Governing Body and eight other governors.
- A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority to discuss the support the school has received.
- Inspectors spoke to three groups of students about their experiences at the school.
- The inspection team listened to students read and looked at an extensive range of other evidence about their achievement, including students' past and present workbooks.
- The inspection team considered 163 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The written views of parents were also taken into account, as were the 69 responses to the staff survey.

### Inspection team

Robert Ridout, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Deirdre Kennedy	Additional Inspector
Julia Morris	Additional Inspector
Lynn Stanbridge	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Aylsham High School is similar in size to the average secondary school.
- Nearly all students are of White British, Irish, Other White or Mixed White heritage.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average at around one in five pupils. The pupil premium is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority or with a parent in the armed services.
- The proportion of students supported by school action is well below the national average at around one twentieth of students. The proportion identified at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average at around a tenth.
- A small number of students are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 attend off-site courses at the Sidestrand Hall Special School.
- The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- The school is part of the Aylsham Trust. This is a partnership between a local cluster of schools. The headteacher is the current Chair of the Trust. The Trust is developing ways to strengthen provision and transition for all students including those known to be eligible for the pupil premium.
- The school works very closely with Norfolk Secondary Education Leaders (NSEL) to help provide system leadership in Norfolk.

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

- Ensure students who are supported by the pupil premium funding make rapid progress from their starting points by making sure that teachers:
  - plan to meet the specific needs of these students in their lessons
  - monitor the progress of students closely and provide the support and guidance they need to improve further.
- Improve teaching further by ensuring that marking gives clear feedback that tells students what to improve and how to improve.
- Strengthen leadership by ensuring that all subject leaders check that teachers use information from assessment consistently well and check the progress of students through the quality of their work to accelerate their progress and raise achievement.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's leadership is strong and so he approaches all tasks with a great sense of purpose. Senior leaders and governors successfully promote a positive, purposeful learning culture in which students are well prepared for a life in modern Britain. Staff feel supported and valued as they work to improve on the good teaching to secure outstanding achievement for all students in the future.
- Leaders at all levels have high expectations of all and are keen to see the school succeed. They accurately identify key strengths and areas for development. Effective leadership is leading to good and better teaching that ensures students typically make good progress.
- Some aspects of leadership and management are outstanding, including the leadership of the pastoral support and promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are taught to be caring, reflective and responsible young people with a keen interest in right and wrong in the world around them. Many have leadership roles within the school and contribute positively to their own success.
- Teachers are held to account for the progress of their students. Teachers' performance is assessed in a robust and rigorous way. Teachers receive good training and support to help them be effective. Pay awards are linked to good teaching and the good achievement of students. Underperformance is appropriately challenged.
- Leadership is not outstanding overall as the highest levels of achievement have not been secured for all students over a sustained period of time. Leaders have introduced strategies to support disadvantaged students. The school's use of pupil-premium funding in Key Stage 4 and in the nurture group in Key Stage 3 is reducing the gaps between eligible students and their peers in school and compared to students nationally. Improvements are evident in English, but it is too early to see their full impact in mathematics. The successes indicate that leaders have a strong capacity to secure further improvements.
- The majority of subject leaders monitor the quality of teaching of their teams and the impact this has on good learning. However, not all of them have been consistent in checking the quality of teachers' marking and the use of assessment with students. School leaders recognise this and there is a strong desire among teachers to improve their practice so that it raises the achievement of students.
- Students experience a sensible, broad and balanced range of both academic and work related subjects that meet the needs of all learners. The range of subjects offered is good. Students start their GCSE courses in Year 9 and are given the option to sit exams at the end of the course. Behaviours and attitudes to learning are improved and results are good.
- Extensive opportunities are provided to expand students' perspectives and to promote equal opportunities. Students value the wide range of additional cultural and sporting activities they can access.
- There is off-site provision for a small number of students in Years 10 and 11. This is monitored closely by a member of the leadership team. Students attend well, are safe and make good progress.
- The school is reviewing and consulting on how they will check on students' progress and their levels of skill following the removal of National Curriculum levels. It is dealing effectively with the challenges associated with this project.
- Careers advice is very effective. The school provides a comprehensive programme to help guide students in their choice of courses. Outside speakers give an additional insight about future possibilities. Students make informed course choices that match their chosen career pathway.
- The local authority provides minimal support for the school. Leaders and teachers at the school share their experience through the partnership that exists between the local clusters of schools.

- The school and governors work well with parents. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Almost all feel their child is happy and well looked after at the school. Over ninety per cent of parents would recommend the school and feel that it is well led and managed.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a wide range of relevant experiences. They regularly keep themselves up to date about the school's performance through reviews, visits, and discussions with all stakeholders and have a good understanding of school data. Governors are able to assimilate the facts and correctly identify the key areas in which the school needs to improve.
  - Governors support and challenge school leaders to raise the standards of teaching and achievement further. They hold the headteacher to account, asking probing questions and seeking answers when needed. They have good systems in place to track and monitor the progress of students. Teachers are rewarded with pay rises only when they can show that their students have made good progress as a result of good teaching.
  - Governors have a good overview of how the pupil premium is spent and the impact this has. They can describe the positive effect that the employment of additional staff to support students in lessons or small groups is having in English and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics. The gaps between students known to be eligible for pupil premium and others in the school and nationally is still too big. Governors have made the closing of the gap a priority for the school.
  - The school's finances are well managed and available resources are employed effectively.
  - Procedures to safeguard students have been audited and meet statutory requirements.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They wear their uniforms emblazoned with distinctive badges proclaiming their leadership roles or acknowledging their achievements with real pride. Students are polite and treat others with the utmost courtesy and respect. Movement around the school is very orderly. Conduct in the restaurant and in the social areas is calm and purposeful.
- Students make a very positive contribution to the school through the numerous and varied leadership roles they perform. They act as great ambassadors for the school and provide excellent role models for other students. Outstanding behaviours are promoted and a genuine respect for their environment is reflected in the absence of litter and graffiti.
- Students exhibit a real desire to learn and achieve their best. Excellent attitudes contribute positively to good and sometimes outstanding learning in lessons. Students adopt mature attitudes when working on their own or in groups. Many are keen to learn from their peers and listen carefully to others as they discuss their ideas. Disruptive behaviours are extremely uncommon and are effectively dealt with on the rare occasions that it does take place.
- Students are fully aware of the different forms of bullying and the harmful effects these have. They can approach and talk to their anti-bullying student leaders or any adult in the school should they encounter bullying, but are emphatic that there is very little need as the school does not tolerate bullying. The school takes rapid action when incidents are reported and uses thoughtful practices to resolve issues. A significant majority of parents confirm that bullying is dealt with well.
- The number of exclusions is very small. This is because of the successful procedures in place and the consistent way in which behaviours are managed.
- Overall attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now above the national average. Students are punctual to both school and lessons. Students really enjoy coming to school to learn.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Teachers have established excellent relationships with students. The students are very approachable and exhibit caring and supportive

attitudes. Staff encourage and help students to develop great personal skills and achieve good academic standards. Students say they feel safe. A great many parents strongly agree with their children.

- The single central record of checks on staff's suitability to work with students is meticulously maintained. School leaders ensure safeguarding procedures are updated and staff are clear about the actions they take if worried about a student's safety. Strong links with external agencies means concerns are acted upon quickly. Support for the most vulnerable students is excellent, ensuring their safety and helping them to successfully overcome barriers to learning.
- The school works hard to ensure students stay safe online. Students are well informed about the risks posed when online and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Students who attend Sidestrand Hall are kept safe because their attendance is closely monitored by teachers and rapid action taken to support them when necessary.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well by the school's positive and welcoming ethos. Students enjoy many opportunities to celebrate their differences and to learn about different cultures. A strong sense of respect and tolerance are promoted. Students develop the fundamental values and skills to help them contribute fully to life in a modern, democratic Britain.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Students' work, inspectors direct observations in lessons and the school's assessment data all indicate that the quality of teaching is good and students make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm explains why students enjoy learning and find it fun. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve. Staff work hard and help them secure good achievements by improving their skills, knowledge and understanding of subjects.
- Teachers use a good range of resources to engage students and encourage them to make clear links to experiences outside the classroom. Relationships are very positive and contribute in a big way to building the confidence of students. Planned homework routinely builds on students' prior learning and encourages them to reflect and research work further.
- The teaching of work related courses is of the highest quality. Students work in well-resourced spaces and are exposed to the high expectations of professionals from relevant industries. As a result, high levels of engagement and good, purposeful learning are typical.
- Tutor time is used well. Communication skills have improved through group activities promoted within the mixed-age tutor groups. Debate and discussion are common as a result of the genuine leadership of the student council. The rich and varied diet of extra-curricular activities provided by the school further provides the chance for students to sharpen their interpersonal skills.
- The teaching of literacy, especially that of reading, is good. The reading ages of students given additional support have risen. The lending of books from the library has increased because students are encouraged to read for pleasure and have a greater and more relevant selection to choose from.
- Teachers engage students really effectively in meaningful discussion that promotes good learning. Skilful questioning is used to check on students' understanding and develop it further when required. In lessons teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to meet the different needs of individuals within the group.
- Marking is variable between subjects. Where it is most successful, in business, geography, history, modern foreign languages and some English books, for example, teachers' comments help students understand what they need to do to improve their work and then check their responses. This is not consistent practice across the school.

**The achievement of pupils is good**

- Students enter the school with broadly average attainment. They make good progress from their starting points and sometimes do better than this to achieve standards that are consistently above average in a wide range of GCSE subjects. In 2013, the proportion of students attaining five or more 5A\* to C grades in their GCSE examinations, including English and mathematics, was well above the national average. These standards were sustained in 2014.
- From their different starting points, most students make outstanding progress in English because of the effective actions taken to improve teaching and raise achievement. In contrast, the proportion making expected progress in mathematics continued to be well above national in 2014, but the proportion exceeding expected progress remains close to national figures.
- Achievement is good in geography, history, science, the creative and performing arts. Students make excellent progress in the school's specialist subjects including business and enterprise.
- Students attending alternative provision make good progress in courses specifically tailored to meet their particular learning needs. This is because teaching is well planned to cater for students needs and the work interests, engages and challenges learners.
- Leaders are taking effective action to ensure equal opportunities for all students, foster good relations and tackle discrimination. Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive good support and make the same good progress as other students in the school.
- The most-able students that enter the school with high levels of attainment in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 make at least similar and sometimes better progress than high-attaining students nationally.
- The spending of the Year 7 catch up funding on focused help and guidance in literacy and numeracy has been effective. The majority of students reach expected levels of attainment during the first year at the school.
- The school enters middle to lower attaining students early for examinations in English and mathematics. Students generally secure grades that suggest good progress on their first entry.
- In 2013, students known to be eligible for the pupil premium made less progress than their peers both in school and compared to other students nationally. On average, students achieved almost two grades lower than their peers in the school in English and in mathematics. In 2014, the gap closed showing that Year 11 students who sat their GCSE examinations were making better progress than previously. The difference had been halved with students achieving one grade lower in both subjects.
- Current information shows that the progress of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is tracked more closely. Planned interventions, especially in English, are resulting in a closing of the gap between this group of learners and their peers within the school. However, the school has identified this work as a priority for improvement as attainment and progress of disadvantaged students remains below that of their peers and other students nationally.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	121164
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	449426

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1057
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Chair</b>	Jenny Youngs
<b>Headteacher</b>	Duncan Spalding
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 May 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01263 733270
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