

Inspection of Hellesdon High School

187 Middletons Lane, Hellesdon, Norwich, Norfolk NR6 5SB

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

The principals of this school are Tom Rolfe and Mike Earl. This school is part of The Wensum Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Daniel Thrower, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Smith.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has raised its expectations of pupils' achievement. Pupils benefit from an ambitious curriculum and lessons that build on what they already know. Pupils are well supported to access learning. They enjoy many of their subjects and appreciate the help that adults give them.

Pupils know that they have a trusted adult to talk to at school. They know to report any issues or worries. Pupils feel safe. They are confident that adults will help them and take their concerns seriously.

Although many pupils display good attitudes to learning, a minority do not. Disruption to learning is too common. Some pupils regularly interrupt their teachers, which impacts the learning of the class. Pupils get frustrated by this poor behaviour.

In the sixth form, students enjoy a warm and welcoming environment. Everyone gets along well and supports each other. Students receive a high-quality education, both academically and outside of lessons. During their 'conferences', they receive valuable guidance, including careers information and more general life skills. This prepares them well for their next steps. Students enjoy attending interesting and challenging lessons. They achieve highly.

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

The school has addressed the weaknesses in the curriculum that contributed to low outcomes in 2022 and 2023. A revised curriculum is now in place across the school. It is well designed to ensure that the knowledge and skills that pupils acquire develop well over time.

Teachers confidently deliver new information clearly. They ensure that new knowledge builds on pupils' prior learning. They regularly check what pupils understand and can do. They use a range of effective strategies to see what pupils have remembered and take appropriate action where they find gaps in pupils' understanding. In most instances, teachers are skilled in planning appropriate activities for pupils that allow them to develop their skills and understanding. In some lessons, pupils who are ready for their next steps have to wait for others to catch up. When this happens, they do not achieve as highly as they could.

The school has high expectations for students in the sixth form. The curriculum successfully builds on what students learn at GCSE. Teachers have good subject knowledge. There is a high degree of consistency in the delivery of lessons, which allows students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to successfully learn new content. Students are positive about their experiences and would recommend the sixth form to others.

The school accurately identifies pupils with SEND. Adults are provided with clear plans that lay out how to best help pupils. Staff are confident in supporting pupils

with SEND to do well. Pupils are also well supported outside of lessons in a quieter area known as 'The Bridge'. This helps pupils with SEND to focus on their learning.

Leaders know how important it is for pupils to be able to read fluently. A minority of pupils lack the skills needed to read well. More precise support is needed to help those few pupils who struggle to read confidently. There are occasions when these pupils struggle to access some parts of their lessons.

Many pupils display positive attitudes towards their education. Where routines are clearly enforced, and expectations are high, pupils focus well on their learning. In these instances, many pupils achieve well. However, the school has not ensured that this is the case for all pupils. Too many lessons are disrupted. Some pupils regularly miss their learning and fall behind due to, for example, removal from class or poor attendance.

The school has prioritised pupils' personal development. Pupils are explicitly taught how to discuss important issues. They talk with maturity about fundamental British values, such as democracy. Pupils are curious about differences in people and display high levels of respect towards people of other races and religions. Leaders have ensured that there is a wide range of clubs on offer. These are well attended and popular. All pupils receive high-quality careers information, education, advice and guidance. This means they have the knowledge needed to make informed decisions about their futures.

Leaders, including trustees and governors, work closely to identify the strengths and areas to develop in the school. They know the needs of the school, and they act in the best interests of the pupils. This includes working with external advisors, who support leaders in securing the identified improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Outside of the sixth form, a minority of pupils do not display positive attitudes and can sometimes disrupt their peers. Some regularly miss lessons due to poor attendance or as a result of receiving behaviour sanctions. Leaders should ensure that a calm and orderly environment is in place across all lessons and that all pupils attend regularly so that learning is not missed.
- In some lessons outside of sixth form, staff do not push pupils towards their next steps quickly enough. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils are supported to move on when they have secured the knowledge they need to consider more complex ideas.

- Pupils who struggle to read are not supported as effectively as they should be. As a result, a minority of pupils are not fluent readers and struggle to access some learning across the curriculum. The school needs to establish effective systems to support weaker readers to gain the skills needed to rapidly become fluent readers.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138039
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10268148
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1,577
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	346
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Smith
Principal	Tom Rolfe and Mike Earl
Website	www.hellesdon.net
Date of previous inspection	21 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Hellesdon High School is part of The Wensum Trust.
- The school currently uses two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, modern foreign language and drama. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and scrutinised support plans for a sample of pupils with SEND across different classes.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors also reviewed documentation relating to school improvement.
- An inspector held discussions with members of the trust, as well as with trustees and governors.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's behaviour and attendance records and met with leaders with responsibility for these areas.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils from different classes across both days of inspection.
- The lead inspector considered the 114 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 99 free-text responses. The lead inspector also considered 88 responses to Ofsted's survey of staff, and 29 responses from pupils to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Bessie Owen, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Nicola Shadbolt	Ofsted Inspector
Garry Trott	Ofsted Inspector
Polly Lankester	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Wilson	His Majesty's Inspector

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