

Acle Academy

Address: South Walsham Road, Acle, Norwich, Norfolk, NR13 3ER

Unique reference number (URN): 138758

Inspection report: 12 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils achieve well. This is reflected in published outcomes that are close to national averages. Recently, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers widened. However, leaders' interventions have supported these pupils. They are beginning to catch up. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well through the curriculum from their individual starting points. As a result, many pupils are well prepared and successfully move on to their next steps.

Pupils are confident readers. They assuredly read and use subject-specific vocabulary well. Specialist support helps those pupils at the earliest stages of reading, or those who are new to the English language, catch up. Pupils use mathematics fluently and apply their knowledge to solve problems. Most pupils write well. They compose well-structured responses to questions. But, some pupils have not secured the key writing, spelling or grammatical knowledge they need to write accurately.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is broad and ambitious for all pupils. Leaders have identified the key knowledge pupils need to learn. The teaching of this knowledge is logically ordered to help pupils use what they have already learned to secure new content.

In general, teaching is effective. Explanations of new information are clear and easy for pupils to understand. Teachers adapt their teaching well when they have detailed knowledge about pupils' individual needs. Teachers check on what pupils understand. They routinely assess how well pupils have secured key knowledge. However, this information is not always used effectively to inform future teaching.

Leaders prioritise key foundational knowledge. Opportunities to read, write and use mathematics are embedded into the curriculum. Teaching helps pupils to read and use subject-specific language. Leaders ensure that pupils at the earliest stages of reading access individualised support. However, the development of pupils' writing is less established. There are plans in place to address this, but it is too early to determine the impact.

Leaders monitor the curriculum and the quality of teaching. However, sometimes the oversight of key strategies, such as the impact of reading interventions, is not as finessed as it could be.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed an extensive and comprehensive personal development programme. The character and culture curriculum covers aspects of personal, social and health education. Pupils learn key knowledge that prepares them well for life in modern Britain. They understand fundamental British values. For example, they know why tolerance and the rule of law are important in a diverse society. Pupils take on leadership roles, such

as charity, community or equality prefects. These help pupils bring their learning about these values into real life. Pupils develop a rich understanding of cultures and religions different to their own. This helps them value their place in a wider community. Pupils understand that the law protects some characteristics that make everyone different. They equally understand why this is important.

The school offers pupils a wide range of opportunities. Trips are carefully selected to support pupils to bring alive their curriculum learning. Trips to the Normandy battlefields help history pupils visualise life in the trenches. Other activities help pupils develop their communication and social skills. Year 7 pupils enjoy residential experiences. These build their ability to work as a team while strengthening friendships. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award supports pupils to learn how to take responsibility for themselves and others.

Leaders have designed the careers programme to raise aspiration. It weaves through other aspects of the curriculum. This helps pupils understand how their subjects can lead to different careers. Leaders provide pupils with access to collective and individualised advice. This helps pupils make well-informed decisions about their next steps.

Pupils take advantage of the wide extra-curricular programme. There is an extensive programme of clubs on offer. Pupils take responsibility to run many of these clubs. Staff encourage disadvantaged pupils to take up this offer. However, leaders do not always track participation rates. This hinders their understanding of the impact of the programme.

Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Leaders have not addressed historical low levels of attendance. Leaders monitor patterns of pupils' absence. However, they do not use this to effectively identify why some pupils remain regularly absent. Therefore, leaders have not helped key groups of pupils overcome their barriers to attending school. As a result, disadvantaged pupils miss school too often. Leaders have begun to tackle low levels of attendance of other pupils. Consequently, more pupils are attending school more often. However, these strategies are at an early stage and have not secured sustained improvement over time.

Pupils are well behaved. They are respectful and polite. The majority of pupils are keen to learn and focus attentively in class. Learning spaces are calm and productive. Disruption is rare. If needed, teachers step in and deal with distracting behaviour consistently well. Leaders provide effective support to the small number of pupils who find it difficult to meet the high expectations. These interventions help the pupils manage their emotions and engage in learning. Bullying is not tolerated. Leaders and pupils are equally determined to ensure that unkind behaviour is seen as unacceptable. If it happens, leaders ensure that it is dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Leaders do not always accurately define the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The barriers some disadvantaged pupils face are not addressed as quickly as they could be. As a result, teachers are not always able to use their expertise to support pupils well enough. Adaptations to teaching lack the necessary precision. This means that, sometimes, these pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Pupils with multiple needs and those who access bespoke support flourish. Leaders ensure that staff have the expertise to help these pupils. Specialist spaces and individualised support help these pupils learn and develop socially. Leaders use the pupil premium funding to ensure disadvantaged pupils do not miss out. For example, they ensure these pupils enjoy the benefits of the school's extensive extra-curricular offer. Strong relationships with external agencies help leaders to ensure vulnerable pupils are well supported. Leaders work with the virtual school to implement an oracy programme. This helps pupils known to social care improve their confidence and communication skills. Leaders track the academic and social progress of vulnerable pupils. However, sometimes they do not use this information to hone and adapt their strategies to maximise their impact.

Leadership and governance**Needs attention** 

Leaders' actions have not secured improvement in key areas of the school quickly enough. Their actions to reduce absence have not supported some pupils to overcome their barriers to regular attendance. The needs of some vulnerable pupils have not been defined precisely enough to support staff to make the most effective adaptations.

Leaders and those responsible for governance have a clear vision for the school. It is rooted in pupils' best interests. In many cases, leaders' improvement strategies are successful in improving pupils' experiences. Leaders check on the implementation of their actions. However, sometimes the interrogation of the impact of these strategies is not as forensic as it could be. This dulls the sharpness of leaders' actions and hinders the pace of improvement.

Staff feel well supported. They view leaders as aspirational role models. Staff value the professional and personal support leaders provide them with. They appreciate how leaders manage their workload. Staff benefit from a broad professional development programme. Teachers at the earliest stages of their careers benefit from high-quality support, and thrive.

Trustees work with trust executives to maintain an accurate picture of the school. They know where there are strengths. Trustees and local governors are acutely aware of where improvements are needed. They are determined to provide the best for all pupils. Trustees robustly hold trust and school leaders to account. They accept no excuses. Trustees ensure that their statutory duties are met in full.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils feel that Acle Academy is an extension of their family. Pupils are well supported when they join the school. They value how well their teachers know them as individuals. Pupils forge new friendships that become strong, meaningful relationships. There is a deep-rooted trust between staff and pupils. This helps pupils feel safe and cared for. If they have worries or concerns, they know there is always someone to speak with. Pupils are confident that they will be helped.

Sometimes pupils' specific barriers to learning are not clearly defined. Here, adaptations to their learning are not as effective as they could be. However, many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from individualised support. They thrive in the classroom and beyond. Pupils enjoy learning. They respond to the high aspirations teachers have for their futures. Pupils work hard. They achieve well.

Pupils are polite and engaging. They value each other's right to learn. Learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils enthusiastically collect rewards pins. These celebrate their achievements and contributions to the school and each other. This is a school community founded on respect. Consequently, bullying and unkind behaviour are rare. If they do happen, they are swiftly addressed. Some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, do not attend school regularly. The support that some of these pupils receive has not helped them overcome their barriers to regular attendance. However, most pupils are now attending school more often.

Pupils value the differences that bring them together. They understand about the importance of living their lives around strong values and purpose. This prepares them well for life beyond the school gates and their futures. Pupils enjoy a diverse array of wider opportunities. They proudly represent the school in sports events. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are encouraged to take part in life-defining experiences. Budding performers, musicians and technical crews lay on ambitious school shows. Pupils take on learning a new skill or craft. Others immerse themselves as wizards or warriors in fantasy role-playing worlds.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that they precisely identify the individual needs of pupils and communicate with staff the most effective strategies to help them adapt their teaching to meet those needs.
 - Leaders should ensure that they develop and implement plans that support pupils to attend school regularly.
 - Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they use the information from quality assurance processes to measure the impact of actions and, if needed, make precise adaptations to improvement strategies.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment information consistently well across the curriculum to identify what pupils know, address misconceptions and adapt future teaching where needed.
-

About this inspection

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 (CEO), Daniel Thrower, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Smith.

The executive principal oversees this school and one other.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the executive principal, the vice principal, the special educational needs coordinator, other members of the leadership team, representatives of the trust executive, including the CEO, the chair of the trust board and a representative of the local advisory board during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils about their learning and life at the school.

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.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:
The school currently makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

Helen Watts: Executive Principal

Lead inspector:

Dave Gibson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Susan Child, Ofsted Inspector

Tessa Holledge, His Majesty's Inspector

Bessie Owen, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

685

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

711

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

24.96%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

5.26%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

5.40%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SpLD - Specific Learning Difficulty, VI - Visual Impairment, OTH - Other Difficulty/Disability, HI - Hearing Impairment, SLCN - Speech, language and Communication, ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder, SEMH - Social, Emotional and Mental Health, PD - Physical Disability, MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty, SLD - Severe Learning Difficulty

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	47.1%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	43.6%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	41.1%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	46.9	46.1	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	44.2	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	45.0	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.08	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.06	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	10.5%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	12.5%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	30.4%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	29.9	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	32.5	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	37.8	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.43	-0.57	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	-0.35	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	10.5%	53.1%	-42.6 pp
2023/24 (final)	12.5%	53.1%	-40.6 pp
2022/23 (final)	30.4%	52.4%	-22.0 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	29.9	50.4	-20.5
2023/24 (final)	32.5	50.0	-17.6
2022/23 (final)	37.8	50.3	-12.5

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.43	0.16	-0.59
2022/23 (final)	-0.35	0.17	-0.52

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	96%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	97%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	90%	94%	Not available

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	10.6%	8.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	10.2%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.3%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	27.6%	23.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	31.0%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	29.3%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright