

Nova Hreod Academy

Akers Way, Moredon, Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 2NQ

Inspection dates

31 January–1 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The trust and school leaders have acted swiftly and with determination. As a result, the school is improving rapidly.
- The principal insists on high standards of behaviour and discipline across the school. This allows teachers to focus on their teaching without the distraction of poor behaviour.
- Pupils now come to lessons expecting to work hard and to learn. They are confident that classrooms will be free of disruption and the atmosphere will help them to make progress.
- Pupils in all year groups are now making good progress across a broad range of subjects. This is in marked contrast to previous years where pupils made insufficient progress.
- The majority of disadvantaged pupils are now making good progress. They benefit from the focus on orderly classrooms and the support of skilful staff.
- The most able pupils are regularly given challenging tasks to tackle and they make good progress with them.
- Through accurate assessments, teachers know exactly what their pupils do and do not understand. Consequently, teachers can target pupils' learning appropriately so that they make better progress.
- The trust has brought considerable resources and expertise to bear to improve the school. It is ensuring that school leaders are well supported in their drive to improve teaching and learning by providing well-targeted training.
- Teachers are keen to improve their skills. They meet often to discuss new ideas and regularly undertake high-quality training.
- Pupils are right when they say that they feel well looked after. They know where to seek help and are confident that staff will support them effectively.
- The curriculum is designed to ensure that pupils develop their basic skills in English and mathematics. This has resulted in increased rates of progress across all abilities and year groups in these two subjects.
- A small number of pupils, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, are persistently absent and so do not achieve as well as their peers.
- Some pupils who have challenging behaviour do not make good progress. School leaders' actions have not been successful in improving the behaviour and attitude to learning of these pupils.
- Rates of fixed-term exclusion remain too high.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for pupils further by:
 - improving the progress of those disadvantaged pupils who have high rates of absence
 - developing the provision for those pupils who are currently at risk of exclusion and are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - reducing rates of persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
 - working more effectively with pupils at risk of exclusion, so that the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions falls.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The trust, local governors, school leaders and staff have worked together very effectively to completely overhaul the school since it converted to academy status in 2014. Because of their combined efforts, the rate of improvement has been impressive.
- The principal's strong and resolute leadership has been central to the recent significant improvements. No member of the school community is in any doubt as to his high expectations of behaviour and discipline across the school. Teachers and most pupils welcome this robust approach. It has led to classrooms focused entirely on learning and with virtually no disruption.
- Leaders have created a culture where staff reflect on their practice and improve it. They have ensured that training opportunities are regular and dedicated to key school priorities. This coherence helps teachers to develop their skills and put them into practice in their classrooms.
- School leaders prioritise recruiting a skilled teaching force which can deliver the quality of teaching they expect. They have appointed subject-specialist teachers and provided them with a very comprehensive package of support to develop their skills further.
- Middle leaders are skilled and enthusiastic in running their departments. Several are relatively new in post but have already made a positive impact. Their teams are well organised and work together to provide consistency across subjects. There is a sense of dynamism among middle leaders, which is a key component of the school's recent success.
- The leadership of the special educational needs and disabilities team is improving and, as a consequence, the progress that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make has improved and is now good.
- Leaders ensure that literacy is a high priority across the school. Teachers routinely feedback to pupils on any mistakes in their spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils respond positively and are making good progress as a consequence.
- Senior leaders have brought about improvements to teaching and learning across all year groups but with a particular focus on Years 7 to 9. It has taken time for improvements in pupils' progress to show but they are now apparent for current pupils.
- The curriculum is providing appropriate opportunities across a broad range of courses for most pupils. Leaders have reorganised the curriculum in response to recent government changes to GCSE requirements. All older pupils can now take the English Baccalaureate range of GCSEs.
- The curriculum for younger pupils develops basic skills well and also gives opportunities to understand democracy, law and why tolerance is important in modern Britain.
- There is a significant focus on English and mathematics in the curriculum. This serves many pupils well in preparing them for success in later life. It has resulted, however, in a reduction in the time spent on other aspects of school life including physical education. This is having a negative impact on the personal development of some pupils.

- Leaders use the extra funding the school receives to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils well. They have accurately assessed pupils' needs and have put a broad range of support in place for them. The most able disadvantaged pupils are the subject of a particular focus within the school and consequently they are doing well.
- Pupils who need to catch up when they start in Year 7 are well served by the school. Senior leaders use additional funding to create teaching groups which give these pupils a boost and allow them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils benefit from a broad range of sporting and artistic opportunities such as the school production. They also enjoy the chance to participate in the Combined Cadet Force.

Governance of the school

- The trust has been very effective in improving the school. It is resolute in working with the local governing body and school leaders to make the necessary improvements. Trustees are ambitious for the school and they are acutely aware of the unsatisfactory outcomes for pupils in the past.
- The trust has a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is deploying considerable resources to address areas which need to develop. It has accurately assessed where improvements need to be made in the quality of teaching and is now providing effective training for teachers.
- The local governing body is increasingly effective in working alongside the trust and school leaders. It challenges and supports the school and fulfils the role of the voice of the local community well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong and shared culture of safeguarding across the school. Pupils say that they feel safe and they know whom to go to report any problem. Staff across the school are appropriately trained and take their responsibilities very seriously. All the necessary checks on staff are carried out with attention to detail.
- Pupils are taught about keeping themselves safe through assemblies and other activities. For example, a recent focus across the school on the dangers of 'sexting' has brought about a fall in the number of reported incidents.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved significantly in the last two years. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve right across the school. Increasingly, pupils have high expectations of themselves and they are rising to the challenge the school sets them.

- Pupils enjoy and benefit from the almost total lack of disruption in classrooms. They listen to teachers attentively and are quick to volunteer an answer when asked. They focus on their work and consequently they make good progress.
- Teachers have redesigned the curriculum for all year groups. It is now well structured and asks a lot of pupils. Pupils are challenged and forced to think hard in every subject. The most able pupils, in particular, are given some complex problems to solve and issues to consider. Their progress is now substantially better than it was in the recent past.
- Teachers are very thoughtful about how to improve the quality of their teaching. They meet regularly to discuss ideas and they are keen to take part in the training activities organised in the school and by the trust.
- Teachers are focusing on a small number of key teaching strategies to improve their classroom practice and hence the experience of pupils. They use these key strategies consistently across the school and so pupils know what to expect and how to respond in every subject. Pupils' progress has increased significantly as a direct result.
- Teachers are subject specialists who understand their subjects well and are able to identify connections for pupils between the different parts of the curriculum they are teaching. This both broadens and deepens pupils' understanding.
- Teachers make very good use of the assessment system they have designed to pinpoint exactly what it is that pupils know and what concepts they are struggling with. This allows them to adapt their follow-up lessons to target pupils' misconceptions and hence ensure that they can continue to progress.
- When assessments show that individual pupils have gaps in their knowledge, there is an additional structured programme to support them. Most pupils appreciate this, as it gives them the opportunity to revisit the parts of their learning they feel they need to.
- When teaching is at its strongest, teachers use questioning astutely to assess how pupils are progressing. Sometimes, however, pupils' understanding is not checked thoroughly enough and this means that any misconceptions are not addressed as quickly as they might be.
- The majority of disadvantaged pupils now receive the support needed to help them make good progress. In Year 11, for example, the most able disadvantaged pupils are given additional support and mentoring to ensure that they achieve well and can access high-quality qualifications in the next phase of their education.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the help they need in classes to make good progress. Additional special educational needs funding is used effectively so that pupils receive good support from teaching assistants and are able to make a good contribution to the classes they are in. There is a strong emphasis on literacy and pupils are responding to this and making good progress.
- A minority of pupils are not making progress because they are not engaged or stimulated by their curriculum. Most are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Instead, they are often absent and some are repeatedly excluded. They are not being successfully prepared for the next phase of their education or life beyond the school's gates.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils socialise and play together well. They are generally confident in their dealings with others and polite to each other and to adults. In their discussions with inspectors, pupils were clear that everyone is welcomed into the school and that the school community is tolerant of people who have different backgrounds or needs.
- Pupils are given a variety of opportunities to expand their spiritual, moral, social and cultural knowledge and understanding. As well as regular assemblies, teachers take time from their curriculum to address issues and dilemmas when they arise and pupils are encouraged to consider and discuss their opinions.
- Pupils have access to good impartial careers guidance and are able to talk knowledgeably about their next steps when they leave the school and enter the next phase of education or training.
- The school's pastoral staff work hard to address the needs of pupils who have emotional or health issues. This support is greatly appreciated by these pupils, who can play a full part in the school because of the help they receive.
- Pupils value the personal, social and health aspects of the curriculum and are keen to engage in them. However, the amount of time the school spends on these aspects has been reduced and this is affecting the personal development of some pupils.
- The school is not currently successfully including a small minority of pupils who, often through circumstances outside school, are difficult to engage with. These pupils find it hard to comply with the school's rules and are repeatedly excluded. They do not feel a part of the school community and their personal development is slowed as a consequence.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour has been a central focus for the school for the last two years and pupils and parents are very complimentary about the improvements over that period. Pupils are now extremely well behaved. There is almost no disruption in lessons and they comply with teachers' requests quickly and without fuss.
- Pupils behave well outside lessons. They arrive and leave in an orderly fashion and they act sensibly at lunchtime and breaktime. Pupils respect the building and the site is free of litter.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are also positive in the large majority of cases. Most are keen to learn and enjoy the calm and purposeful atmosphere.

- The absence rate is too high. A larger than national average number of pupils are persistently absent. Teachers do not always make sure that absent pupils catch up with the work they missed on their return and thus they struggle to make the progress they should.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions is higher than the national average. Too many pupils are excluded more than once.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' books showed that pupils in all year groups are making consistently good progress across virtually all subjects. Key stage 3 pupils are progressing particularly well. This finding is supported by the school's own tracking information. Pupils are now doing well in both English and mathematics. This is in marked contrast to previous cohorts of pupils whose progress was low or very low.
- Standards of literacy are good across the school. Teachers across all subjects have focused on spelling, punctuation and grammar and the results are plain to see in pupils' books. Pupils read well, too; most are fluent and confident readers. The most able pupils read appropriate texts with depth and with comprehension. Numeracy across the curriculum has not been a priority for the school and consequently pupils are less confident in numeracy.
- The most able pupils are producing work of a very high standard across the curriculum. The books of those now in Year 11 show that they are highly literate, able to present an argument and solve complex mathematical problems. Younger high-ability pupils are also producing work of an appropriately good standard and making the progress necessary to prepare them for their future GCSEs.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are now making good progress from their starting points. Where appropriate, teachers modify their teaching to meet pupils' needs and teaching assistants are deployed effectively with those that need additional support.
- A small number of Year 7 pupils need to catch up with their peers. These pupils are given the extra support they need in English and mathematics and are making faster progress because of it.
- The majority of disadvantaged pupils are now achieving in line with other pupils nationally as a result of the well-targeted use of extra government funding available to the school. This is a very significant improvement on previous years when their progress was well below average. The most able disadvantaged pupils are making particularly good progress because of the targeted support that has been put in place for them.
- A small number of disadvantaged pupils are not making good progress because they are often absent and their needs have not yet been successfully addressed.
- In 2016, pupils' levels of attainment were broadly in line with national averages in English and mathematics and across most of the rest of the subject range. Outcomes were the highest they had ever been, having improved from very low levels in previous years.

- In previous years, the progress pupils made from their starting points was significantly slower than the national average. Since 2014, there has been a marked improvement each year, although it is only with the current cohort that pupils are finally making the progress of which they are capable.

School details

Unique reference number	140515
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10024895

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	791
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Kevin Logan
Principal	Darren Barton
Telephone number	01793528800
Website	www.novahreodacademy.org.uk
Email address	admin@novahreodacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance for what academies should publish about the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) annual report or information about the SEND local offer.
- The school has been a member of the United Learning Multi-Academy Trust since January 2014.
- Nine out of 10 pupils are of White British heritage. There are few from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding is in line with the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a wide range of subjects and age groups, and scrutinised a wide range of pupils' written work. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils before and after school and at breaks and lunchtimes. They talked both informally and in formal interviews with pupils from both key stage 3 and key stage 4.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour logs, safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- Meetings were held with the director and deputy director of United Learning Multi-Academy Trust and governors, the headteacher, and senior and middle leaders.
- An inspector listened to a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of 64 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took into consideration 36 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Andrew Lovett, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sally Apps	Ofsted Inspector
Roger Garrett	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Williams	Her Majesty's Inspector

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