

# Inspection of The Fen Rivers Academy

Kilhams Way, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 2HU

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Inspection dates: 14 and 15 September 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Early years provision

**Insufficient evidence**

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils like coming to this school. This is reflected in their good attendance. Pupils feel valued as individuals. They usually respond well to the high expectations leaders have for what pupils will achieve by the time they leave the school.

Pupils start each day with a shared breakfast, and this is a chance for them to check in with adults about how they are feeling. They love breaktimes, playing football and using the range of climbing apparatus and toys.

For the most part, pupils engage in their learning, take part in discussions and produce good-quality work. When the purpose of learning is less clear or is not well matched to what pupils need to learn next, pupils can be less motivated and take themselves out of classrooms. However, staff are skilled at getting pupils quickly back into lessons, so they do not opt out of learning.

Staff deal with any bullying quickly and appropriately. Pupils know that adults will help them when they feel upset or angry.

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

Leaders have completely changed the culture of the school since the previous full inspection. Improving behaviour has been a priority. Staff use highly consistent language and approaches to help pupils manage their behaviour. They are skilled at helping pupils who are stressed or angry to calm down quickly and be ready to learn. Staff know that every interaction they have with individual pupils makes a difference.

Leaders have ensured that there is a complete curriculum in place. There are clear pathways through each year group, setting out the knowledge that pupils should learn in each subject. However, teachers do not always follow these sequences of learning. Sometimes, the work that pupils are given is poorly matched to what they already know and can do. As a result, pupils' gains in knowledge are too uneven.

Many pupils are reluctant writers. Too often, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in their written work are low. Some pupils do not aspire to reach the same standards in writing that they demonstrate in discussion or other ways of responding.

Teachers support pupils who are still at an early stage of reading effectively. They teach phonics consistently. Pupils read interesting books that are well matched to their reading knowledge. Some older pupils are not motivated to read individually, although they enjoy discussing texts read as a whole class.

Teachers do not always use available information well to adapt lessons and take account of identified barriers to pupils' learning. Until recently, pupils often did not complete learning tasks. Leaders have taken steps to reduce this. However, too

many pupils have missed important steps in learning and lack a secure understanding of important subject knowledge.

Every pupil has a personalised 'personal development, behaviour and attitudes' curriculum. This teaches pupils how to be resilient and cope with difficult feelings. Pupils learn to be reflective when things do not go well. They understand what they need to do to move forward. Pupils are motivated by rewards for being in the right place and doing the right thing.

Pupils have lots of opportunities for physical development. Leaders have introduced school trips, such as outdoor adventure activities and swimming. Pupils learn about different careers. Leaders work with local colleges so that pupils know about options for future learning. Staff have planned a curriculum to build independence and readiness for work or college. This is helping prepare pupils for adult life, and education, training and/or employment.

Staff feel well supported and part of a team. Leaders have a comprehensive training programme in place that ensures staff develop the skills and common language to support the pupils with whom they work.

Governors have the skills and expertise to successfully support and challenge school leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have comprehensive knowledge of the risks that pupils may face. Staff deal with concerns quickly and appropriately. They help pupils cope with situations with a range of bespoke activities and therapies from trained staff.

Leaders maintain comprehensive and detailed records. They are skilled at managing and addressing any concerns. Leaders work very closely with children's services and local health teams. Daily briefings and debriefs ensure that any emerging concerns are carefully addressed, for example online bullying between pupils.

Pupils learn to keep themselves safe. They feel safe in school.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The way in which teachers implement the planned curriculum is inconsistent. Some aspects are not well sequenced or appropriately matched to what pupils already know or need to learn next. Some of pupils' written activities are not demanding enough. As a result, pupils' learning does not always enable them to

make steady progress. Leaders need to ensure that teaching and activities are more precisely matched to what pupils already know and can do.

- Until very recently, when pupils have missed key steps in learning or knowledge, this has not been followed up. This means that pupils have gaps in their learning. Leaders need to ensure that their new systems to ensure that pupils make up any missed learning are securely established.
- The detailed learning plans that are in place are not used well enough in all subject areas to adapt learning to meet pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils' academic progress is variable. Leaders need to ensure that teachers make adaptations to meet pupils' needs across the whole curriculum.

## 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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141948
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241125
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special sponsor led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	48
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Kath Grant
<b>Headteacher</b>	Amanda Fewkes
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thefenriversacademy.org.uk">www.thefenriversacademy.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 and 30 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This school provides specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school currently has pupils in Years 3 to 9. Previously, pupils have been admitted in Year 2 as well.
- There are currently no children in early years, and no planned curriculum, so a judgement was not made on this area of the framework. There is provision for an early years classroom and outside area if these were to be required.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider and two registered alternative providers to provide aspects of education for a small number of pupils.
- The school is part of the Catch22 multi-academy trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. The school ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next step in their education and/or adulthood.

## Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive principal, the headteacher and other members of the leadership team. They met with teachers and subject leaders. They met with representatives of the local governing body and trustees. They spoke to the school's mathematics consultant and a representative of the local authority. Some of these meetings were conducted by video conference. They spoke to one of the alternative providers that the school uses.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, physical education and personal development, behaviour and attitudes. For each subject, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at examples of pupils' work in other curriculum subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record and a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding files. Inspectors spoke to leaders (including the designated safeguarding leads), staff, pupils and a parent.
- Inspectors considered the four responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- When inspectors spoke to pupils, a member of school staff was present to support pupils. This did not affect the questions asked or discussions inspectors had with pupils.

## Inspection team

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Joanna Pedlow

Ofsted Inspector

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