

Howard Community Academy

Beard Road, Bury St Edmunds IP32 6SA

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a happy and caring community. It is calm and purposeful. Positive relationships are central to the ethos, and pupils behave well in lessons and on the playground. Bullying is rare, but when it does happen, adults listen to pupils and act on their concerns. Pupils feel safe.

Leaders have high expectations both for and of pupils. Pupils are developing positive attitudes towards learning. Due to the education they have received in the past, there are gaps in pupils' learning. Leaders have designed a curriculum that accounts for this. It is helping to support pupils to catch up.

Families are involved in pupils' learning through trips and visits. Pupils talk with excitement about these. Their experiences are further enhanced through the celebration of the school's core values of aspiration, community, experience and nurture.

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

Howard Community Academy has been through challenging times since the predecessor school was judged to be inadequate in 2017. Prior to joining the Anglian Learning Multi-Academy Trust there have been changes of leadership within the school. This caused instability and unhappiness over several years.

All that has changed. The school now has strong leadership from school and trust leaders.

School and trust leaders have a strong and shared vision. They are committed to improving pupils' outcomes. They have put in place support and training for teachers. This has helped the school to improve quickly.

Leaders are committed to developing a love of reading. They understand that reading makes it possible for pupils to learn in other subjects. The recently adopted phonics programme aims to teach pupils quickly to read. Because it is new, some teachers are not confident in how to teach it well. There are some pupils who cannot yet read fluently. Nevertheless, pupils talk enthusiastically about the books their teachers read to them. Parents are involved in the celebration of books and reading through reading cafes.

The school's curriculum is now well planned and sequenced. Lessons include opportunities for pupils to revisit prior learning. This helps to remind them and remember what they have learned before. However, because of a legacy of weaker education, pupils still have many gaps in their understanding. This means that, in some classes, pupils are not following the curriculum for their year group. In

addition, some teachers do not refine their teaching to cater well for the different needs of pupils in their class. They do not assess pupils' understanding well enough.

Leaders are committed to making sure the gaps in pupils' learning are tackled. They have made significant progress, but their work is incomplete.

Pupils generally behave well in lessons. They listen carefully and participate actively in their learning. Pupils are helped to talk about their feelings and know there are calm spaces to go to if they feel upset or need to be on their own. Despite pupils' largely positive attitudes towards learning, some pupils are absent from school too often.

Pupils talk about what they have learned about world religions. They learn about people and lifestyles that are different. They are tolerant and respectful towards each other and their teachers. They welcome new pupils to the school and help them to settle. The curriculum helps pupils understand that people are not all the same. They recognise 'it is okay to be different'. They enjoy the range of clubs the school offers.

The trust has worked effectively with school leaders to identify appropriate support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers are trained to use approaches that help everyone learn. The 'Hive' helps pupils with specific needs. Staff are trained to use therapeutic approaches which support these pupils. While leaders do check the appropriateness of pupils' support plans, school and trust leaders are further developing systems to review the support pupils and families receive.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is a bright and engaging environment. Leaders have identified the importance of developing spoken language and communication. As a result, teachers plan activities that help support the youngest children to communicate. There are spaces for children to work in small groups and to learn outside. Children begin to learn to read in the nursery. Staff are kind and caring. They take care of the children and focus on their social and emotional needs and welfare. Children are supported well as they move from the nursery into the reception class. Parents are helped to share their children's learning through effective communication between school and home.

Leaders have united, galvanised and enthused the staff through their vision for success. They have worked effectively to build positive relationships with the community. Staff and most parents are fully behind the improvements that leaders are driving.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is leaders' top priority. They understand the risks in the community that impact on pupils outside of school. They work closely with external agencies to

support pupils and their families. They are tenacious in their approach to challenging external agencies when families have not received the support that they need.

Staff are well trained. They receive regular safeguarding updates and reminders. They know how to report their concerns. Leaders pursue these and provide staff with feedback.

If pupils are worried they know and feel confident to talk to staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Learning is not tailored well enough to the needs of all pupils. Some pupils continue not to learn as well as they should. Leaders need to make sure that all teachers have the skills they need to adapt their work to meet all pupils' needs.
- Some pupils do not read with fluency and confidence. This limits what they understand from a text. It prevents their access to the wider curriculum. Leaders need to make sure that the recently introduced phonics programme is implemented with fidelity. Intensive support for older pupils is needed to help them read confidently and fluently.
- Some pupils miss too much school. They miss out on aspects of the curriculum. Leaders should make every effort to lower absence through support and challenge to families.

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

Unique reference number	146280
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10254979
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	163
Appropriate authority	Trust board
Chair of governing body	Claire Lawton
Headteacher	Alison Weir
Website	www.howardacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- Since the predecessor school was graded inadequate, this school became an academy. In April 2020, it joined the Anglian Learning Trust.
- The school has had significant changes in leadership since the predecessor school was inspected.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke

with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1 and 3 read to an adult.

- The lead inspector evaluated the curriculum plans and spoke to leaders and pupils about several other subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and the early years leader. The lead inspector met with members of the interim executive board (IEB), trustees and senior leaders from Anglian Learning.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of recruitment and pre-employment checks, and reviewed safeguarding paperwork and systems. Inspectors also spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, members of the IEB and pupils.
- Inspectors considered 30 responses, along with 30 free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents. Inspectors also considered 23 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Nick Southgate, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Hemmings

His Majesty's Inspector

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