

# Inspection of Howard Community Academy

Beard Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 6SA

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Inspection dates:	1 and 2 July 2025
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Alison Weir. This school is part of Anglian Learning, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jonathan Culpin, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kenneth Murphy.

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

Pupils enjoy school. They are happy and safe. Pupils are eager to win the headteacher's award for embodying the school's values of 'nurture, community, experience and aspiration'.

Pupils are keen to rise to the high expectations set by staff. They behave well and follow the school's principles of 'calm, safe, respect'. Pupils are proud of their work and say that teachers make learning fun. They achieve well, overall.

Classroom learning comes to life with visits to local farms, museums and events such as experiencing life in First World War trenches. Creative experiences make learning memorable. For example, pupils make terracotta soldiers with their parents and carers as they study the Shang dynasty.

Pupils enjoy rich experiences to extend their talents and interests. These include collaborations with the arts council, brass music tuition and singing in a cathedral choir. The plentiful clubs include gardening, karaoke and cricket. Many pupils participate, including disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils adopt meaningful leadership roles. These include reading roles, active and art champions, school councillors, eco-leaders and play leaders. Pupils relish these roles, which prepare them for their responsibilities of the future.

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

The school has made significant improvements to the curriculum. The development of the whole child is firmly at its heart. The school's published outcomes in national tests and assessments do not represent the quality of learning now provided. The curriculum is highly ambitious for all pupils. Each curriculum area is coherently planned, with high expectations of content and progression of knowledge and skills. There is a strong and creative focus on making pupils' learning exciting.

The school prioritises learning to read and has secured notable improvements in the teaching of early reading. Children start to learn to read as soon as they join the Nursery Year, learning through games and rhymes. In Reception Year, children start learning phonics. Their teachers check that children's phonics knowledge is secure. This means that children who need help to keep up are rapidly identified. Teachers carefully match pupils' reading books to the sounds that pupils know, so they can practise reading at home. Pupils receive appropriate support to develop their confidence and fluency.

The school provides specialist support for pupils who have low levels of communication and language skills. However, this support is not consolidated sufficiently in lessons. As a result, pupils are not supported to develop their communication and language skills as well as they could be.

Staff have strong subject knowledge. They make learning fun for pupils. For example, pupils learn to march and live like a Roman army and question 'Boudicca'. In a few subjects, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise and master more complex knowledge. This means they do not achieve as well as they could in these subjects.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. The school is quick to embed appropriate support. Staff are well trained to understand how to meet pupils' needs. This means that pupils with SEND complete the same learning as their peers. As a result, pupils with SEND thrive.

The school's work to support pupils' wider development is exemplary. Pupils' well-being is at the heart of the school's personal development programme. Pupils are encouraged to be kind, thoughtful and respectful. Pupils' knowledge about other cultures and religions is strong. They experience the diversity of religions in real life. For example, the school's prayer space welcomes parents and pupils from different world religions to pray together. Pupils learn about the rule of law and democracy through the curriculum. For example, pupils practise their knowledge of democratic processes when they vote for their pupil leaders each year.

Pupils are active members of the local community. For example, they sing in the local care home with 'Sparkles the Bear', capturing memories for pupils and residents. Pupils are encouraged to take care of the local environment, such as through taking part in 'Bury in Bloom'.

Leaders support staff well. They say that leaders always consider their workload and well-being. Local governors are knowledgeable and rigorous in fulfilling their duties. The trust has a strong oversight of the school, providing appropriate levels of challenge and support. The trust recognises the 'relentless optimism and determination' of the school to provide the very best for children.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- In a few subjects, teaching does not give routine opportunities for pupils to extend and consolidate their knowledge and skills. Some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could as a result. The school should ensure that pupils have sufficient time and routine opportunities to practise and develop their skills and knowledge in every curriculum area.
- The school's approaches to supporting pupils with weak language skills are not implemented consistently well. This affects how well these pupils learn. The school

should ensure that strategies for supporting pupils' language skills are implemented consistently well across the 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](#)' 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146280
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10378581
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	202
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Kenneth Murphy
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Jonathan Culpin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Weir
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.howardacademy.org">www.howardacademy.org</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	18 and 19 January 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Anglian Learning, a multi-academy trust.
- The school uses five unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school manages a breakfast club.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. The lead inspector also met with representatives from the trust, including the CEO, director of primary education and director of inclusion.
- The lead inspector also met those with responsibility for local governance, including the chair of the local governing board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, history and physical education. 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. The inspectors also viewed pupils' work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to the staff survey. Inspectors considered the views of pupils through discussions held with them during the inspection. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to the online Ofsted pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Rowena Simmons, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
John Crane	Ofsted Inspector

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