

Inspection of Westbourne Academy

Marlow Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 5JN

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 June 2025

The quality of education **Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes **Inadequate**

Personal development **Inadequate**

Leadership and management **Inadequate**

Previous inspection grade Good

The principal of this school is Martin Higgon. This school is part of Academy Transformation 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), Mark McCourt, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Pat Beanland.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils behave very well. They are polite, friendly and work hard. Pupils are pleased when there are no distractions so they can get on well with their learning. Where behaviour is settled, pupils benefit from warm and positive relationships with staff. However, learning is frequently interrupted by the poor behaviour of some pupils. These pupils frequently display disruptive behaviour in lessons and corridors which significantly impacts the smooth running of the school. This behaviour can be intimidating and leaves some staff and pupils feeling nervous and unsettled.

Mostly the school has high expectations of pupils' achievement. However, these are not fully realised. In some lessons, particularly where there are fewer disruptions, pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. However, too often, teachers are unable to deliver the curriculum effectively due to the poor behaviour of some pupils. When this happens, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils are taught about life in modern Britain through a well-considered programme that promotes their personal development. They are taught about respect and tolerance. Many pupils are considerate and kind. However, a significant minority of pupils do not demonstrate these values. Many pupils dislike the prejudicial language that they frequently hear around school.

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

The school has a well-structured curriculum in place. It is appropriately designed to build on pupils' prior learning and deepen their understanding over time. Many teachers are skilled in delivering the curriculum effectively. They explain new information clearly and check pupils' understanding at appropriate times. 'Do now' tasks are frequently used at the start of lessons to help pupils recall prior learning. Teachers often use this information well to provide targeted support to pupils who need it. Where this happens, and when learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour, pupils achieve well.

In contrast, some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not receive the same educational experience. The school does not have a clear enough understanding of pupils' specific needs, particularly the needs of pupils with SEND. The systems to check how well these pupils are doing, both academically and emotionally, are not strong enough. Some pupils with SEND are taught, on occasion, in separate rooms. These spaces are not used well enough to provide them with the targeted help that they need. As a result, many pupils with SEND struggle to access their learning successfully.

The school has some support in place for pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read. However, this support is not closely checked to see how effective it is. The school does not have a clear enough picture of which pupils need extra help with reading or how well they are doing. As a result, some pupils, including those with SEND, do not get the

help that they need to develop reading skills quickly. This means they struggle to read fluently and to access the wider curriculum.

The school has not established a consistent or effective approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Many staff feel unsupported. Disruption is frequent, in lessons and around the school, with many pupils displaying a lack of self-discipline and respect towards others. As a result, some pupils feel anxious. Pupils' attendance rates are low and show little sign of improvement, reflecting the negative attitudes that some pupils have towards school. However, many pupils are kind, polite and eager to learn. They are keen to do well, but their experience is too often disrupted by the poor behaviour of others.

Some pupils experience derogatory language from their peers. This can be linked to race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. This behaviour has become normalised, so incidents are frequently not reported. When they are reported, staff respond appropriately. However, the school is not taking effective action to address this issue. As a result, some pupils are not developing the respect and tolerance needed to live and work in a diverse society.

Pupils who take part in activities such as Cadets and football are positive about these opportunities, which help them to build confidence, teamwork and leadership skills. However, a significant minority of pupils do not access a wide or rich set of experiences to develop their talents and interests. From Year 7, pupils learn about the wide range of careers open to them.

The school, including trustees and member of the local governing body, are aware of the challenges that the school faces. Although they have taken some steps to bring about improvement, these have not had the intended impact. The morale of many staff is low. Parents, carers and pupils are increasingly frustrated by the decline in behaviour and the negative impact this has on their learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils, including a significant minority who are persistently disruptive and defiant, do not behave well. Many staff feel unsupported in managing behaviour. Often, pupils' poor conduct disrupts learning and contributes to some pupils feeling anxious and worried. The school should implement a clear, consistent behaviour policy and ensure that all staff are supported to apply it effectively to establish a safe, respectful environment for all.

- The school does not have a clear understanding of the specific needs of pupils with SEND. The support that they receive is inconsistent, and the separate spaces in which they work are not used well enough to provide targeted help. As a result, many pupils with SEND struggle to access learning. They do not achieve as well as they should. The school should improve its systems for identifying pupils' need in a timely manner. It should also ensure that staff are equipped to adapt their teaching appropriately so that pupils with SEND achieve well.
- The support for pupils at the earliest stages of reading is not coherently designed or delivered consistently well. The school does not have a sufficiently clear oversight of which pupils need help or how well they are progressing in building their reading knowledge. As a result, some pupils, including those with SEND, do not develop the reading fluency that they need to access the wider curriculum quickly enough. The school should ensure that its early reading support is timely, targeted to pupils' needs and closely monitored to secure rapid and sustained improvement in pupils' reading skills.
- Some pupils experience derogatory language from their peers. Often incidents are not reported. The school is not doing enough to challenge discriminatory attitudes or prevent them from happening. The school must take proactive steps to promote a culture of respect, where all pupils feel confident to report concerns and understand and demonstrate inclusion, equality and mutual respect.
- Pupils' attendance rates are low and show little sign of sustained improvement. Too many pupils are regularly absent from school, which affects their learning, their personal development and their sense of belonging. The school should develop and implement a clear, strategic approach to improving attendance. They should identify and address the barriers that stop pupils coming to school and ensure that appropriate support is in place where concerns persist.

HMCI strongly recommends that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

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

Unique reference number	139288
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10407130
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1068
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Pat Beanland
CEO of the trust	Mark McCourt
Principal	Martin Higgon
Website	www.westbourne.attrust.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 June 2024, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Academy Transformation Trust.
- A new CEO was appointed in April 2025.
- A new principal was appointed in September 2024.
- A new vice principal was appointed in June 2025.
- The school uses one unregistered and four registered alternative providers.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act. 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.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This is the second inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors discussed with the leaders the current context of the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, physical education, religious studies and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with trust staff, including the CEO of the trust, the deputy CEO, the trust director of secondary education, an executive principal and trust staff with responsibility for SEND and safeguarding. They also met with the principal and other senior staff.
- An inspector met with members of the trust board, including the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents relating to school improvement and governance, behaviour and attendance, alternative provision, enrichment, careers and pupils with SEND. They also held meetings with staff with responsibilities in these areas.
- 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 considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also spoke to groups of pupils and took into consideration Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupils survey.

Inspection team

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