

Neale-Wade Academy

Address: Wimblington Road, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 9PX

Unique reference number (URN): 139272

Inspection report: 13 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

This school requires significant improvement

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **significant improvement** because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have taken robust and timely action to bring about significant improvements in pupils' attendance and behaviour. Although pupils' overall attendance is still below national averages, this has improved markedly over time and continues to rise. The number of pupils who are regularly absent from school has reduced considerably. While the attendance of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has taken longer to improve, leaders' actions have also had a positive impact on ensuring that these pupils attend school more regularly.

The success in improving pupils' attendance is mirrored in the improvements seen in standards of pupils' behaviour. A clear and consistently followed behaviour policy is used to help ensure a calm learning environment across the school. Despite the variation in the quality of teaching, pupils are typically positive towards their learning, with leaders appropriately addressing occasional instances of complacency from pupils. Pupils are generally kind and considerate to each other. Discrimination and bullying are rare. If incidents do happen, pupils feel confident to report issues to staff. Some pupils, such as those with social, emotional, mental health needs, receive extra help to manage their emotions. They are well supported by teachers and the wider pastoral team.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear vision for supporting pupils' personal development. This is underpinned by a structured, taught programme, offered alongside a flexible approach that responds to pupils' needs. The personal, social and health education curriculum ensures that pupils are taught key life skills. Where necessary, leaders adapt the content in these sessions in response to the changing risks that pupils face in life. As a result, pupils learn about current and emerging risks to their wellbeing, including online safety issues such as deepfakes, alongside broader themes linked to health, relationships and decision-making.

The personal development programme supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs and experiences and to respect the values of others. They learn about a range of faiths and cultures through the curriculum and through visits to school from faith leaders. This helps pupils to develop tolerance and an understanding of difference. Pupils demonstrate positive social skills. They understand the importance of fairness and respect, reflecting the school's promotion of fundamental British values.

The school’s pastoral support is a clear strength. Pupils know who to turn to if they need help and are confident accessing support. A responsive and caring pastoral team provides effective support for pupils who face personal challenges. This helps them to remain engaged in school. This support is particularly important for many disadvantaged pupils, who benefit from additional guidance and targeted intervention.

The school’s relationships, sex and health education is appropriate and age-related. Pupils learn about healthy and respectful relationships, consent, and how to recognise and report online and offline risks to their wellbeing. Pupils appreciate the respectful relationships between boys and girls and feel confident that any concerns reported would be taken seriously.

Careers education is developing well. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to independent and impartial careers advice. As a result, there are low numbers of pupils who leave the school without an appropriate destination.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard

The sixth form is currently in a period of transition. At the time of this inspection, there are only a small number of students on roll in Year 13, and no students currently in Year 12. This follows a decision to temporarily pause recruitment into the sixth form. Leaders plan to offer post-16 courses again from September 2026.

Leaders have rightly redesigned the sixth-form provision for the current cohort while undertaking a targeted relaunch with current Year 11 students. Leaders are confident that the number of applications for the coming academic year has increased significantly. A number of subjects are being offered to reflect the local demand, while also taking into account student voice.

Students in the sixth-form achieve better than their peers in the main school. The attainment and progress they make in national examinations are broadly in line with national averages. A-level outcomes in 2025 improved markedly from 2024, with average grades, for example, rising significantly. Leaders support students to make progress from their starting points through personalised academic support, mentoring and close tracking. This is particularly effective for sixth-form students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Sixth-form students benefit from a wide range of non-qualification activities. Sessions include finance and budgeting, cooking, road safety, county lines awareness, mental health and wellbeing. Students also complete meaningful work experience across various sectors including education, care, retail and engineering. This helps to develop their confidence and employability skills. All students receive high-quality, individualised guidance, including one-to-one interviews, university visits, apprenticeship support and personal statement guidance. This supports them to be well prepared for their next steps.

Needs attention ●

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

In recent years, there have been significant changes to the school's curriculum and leaders' oversight of this. Leaders acknowledge that the previous curriculum and how it was taught were not good enough. New leaders have been instrumental in supporting the school to improve the quality of the curriculum and teaching. They have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. They have begun to embed high-quality, evidence-informed strategies to develop teachers' expertise. This has started to have a positive impact for many pupils.

Many staff demonstrate appropriate subject knowledge. However, their skill in adapting lessons that are suitably designed to meet all pupils' needs is highly variable. Too often, teachers do not have a secure enough understanding of what pupils know or can do. They do not consistently make checks on pupils' understanding and use this to inform future teaching. This prevents pupils from developing important knowledge and skills. While there are gaps in the support that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive, these weaknesses also impact other pupils, such as those with high levels of prior attainment.

Leaders have started work to close pupils' gaps in reading and writing. This work is in its infancy and is not embedded. As a result, weaknesses in some pupils' literacy are impacting how prepared they are for their next steps.

Inclusion

Needs attention ●

Too often, pupils with vulnerabilities do not receive high-quality or timely support to address the barriers to their learning. This is particularly the case in the classroom where the adaptations staff make are variable and, often, not fully effective. Although there are systems in place to monitor the progress that pupils make, there remains too much variability in the quality and timeliness of support strategies. As a result, many disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well.

Leaders have, however, recently invested significant resources into improving this area. As a result, inclusive practices have begun to improve. Leaders have established appropriate systems to identify and support vulnerable pupils. Leaders have started to support staff on improving the adaptations made for pupils. These improvements are recognised by many parents and pupils.

In the main, collaboration with professionals such as the virtual school is effective in supporting pupils. Staff with responsibility for supporting vulnerable pupils, including, for example, those involved in pastoral care, those monitoring alternative provision and those who oversee the care provided for pupils known (or previously known) to children's social care, work together to ensure that pupils benefit from effective holistic care. This partnership working has had a notable impact in supporting vulnerable pupils to be fully included in school life. As a result, they now participate in more enrichment opportunities, attend school more regularly and receive fewer behaviour sanctions.

There have been considerable changes to school leadership in the last 3 years. The principal has appointed a new senior leadership team. Many changes have also been made to the trust's executive team and to those in governance positions. These new teams are working together to accurately identify and prioritise actions for improvement. Their work has begun to have a notable impact on improving aspects of the school. The trustees meet their statutory requirements and have robust systems in place to support and challenge the school.

There remains too much variation in standards at the school. Leaders are aware of this. They have identified areas which are underperforming, such as the achievement of pupils, and have introduced systems in place to address this. Some of this work remains in its early stages and it is too soon to see the full impact of this.

Professional learning opportunities for staff have improved, although there remains more to be done. This is particularly the case around developing teachers' skills in adapting learning to meet pupils' needs and using assessment skilfully to help pupils improve.

Staff are positive about the changes that leaders have brought in. They recognise the significant improvements and value the new vision and direction of the school. Parents and carers are more varied in their views. While many recognise the improving picture, others remain frustrated with the inconsistencies in teaching and pupils' achievement.

Urgent improvement

Achievement

Urgent improvement

Many pupils do not achieve well. Over a sustained period of time, their progress through the curriculum has been limited. Pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of key stage 4 are consistently low. These weaknesses in achievement range across different pupil groups and across most subjects. Much of this is linked to historical weaknesses in the curriculum that leaders have identified and have begun to address.

Pupils who are disadvantaged achieve less well than other disadvantaged pupils nationally. Likewise, pupils of different prior attainment groups, including high prior attainers, consistently achieve less well than similar pupil groups nationally. Pupils' low achievement, including in mathematics and English, means that many are not as well prepared for their next steps as they should be.

Older students in the school's post-16 provision typically achieve well. Although the number of students in the sixth form is relatively small, they often achieve well at key stage 5, across the different courses on offer. These students are better prepared for their next steps.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils' achievement at this school is poor. For too many pupils, the support they receive to overcome barriers to their learning is inconsistent. As a result, the academic progress that many groups of pupils make across key stages 3 and 4 is too low. This is particularly the case for pupils who are disadvantaged, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and pupils with high prior attainment.

Several other areas of the school are beginning to improve. Pupils are positive about the improvements that they can see being made to their school. Many of these changes are beginning to have a positive impact on their learning. For example, pupils appreciate the significant improvements in behaviour that have helped turn the school into a calm and welcoming environment. Pupils can focus in lessons, as their lessons are rarely disrupted. Pupils have begun to benefit from curriculum with greater ambition than was previously the case. When this is taught well, it equips them appropriately for their next stage of education or learning. However, notable variability in the quality of teaching impacts how well many pupils achieve. Many pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge and skills. This stops them achieving as well as they should.

The pastoral support offered to pupils is a strength of the school. In particular, where pupils have barriers to learning which are linked to their emotional needs, these are generally addressed well. Pupils have positive relationships with staff. They trust that the staff and the systems of support in school will help them well, as and when this is needed.

Pupils feel happy and safe. Relationships between pupils and their peers are positive. Incidents of bullying are increasingly rare and, when they occur, dealt with effectively. Pupils are considerate of each other. They make friends easily at school and enjoy taking part in a broad range of extra curricular clubs and trips. Many pupils take up leadership roles. For example, school prefects play a meaningful part in the school community, supporting with enrichment opportunities, engaging in charity work and mentoring academic groups. Pupils' attendance has increased significantly over time.

Next steps

- Leaders, including those with responsibility for governance, should ensure that pupils' achievement in national tests and assessments improves, so that all groups of pupils are well prepared for their next stage in education or training.
- Leaders should continue to strengthen teachers' pedagogical knowledge through targeted professional development, so that all pupils, including those with high prior attainment, are appropriately challenged and achieve the academic standards of which they are capable.
- Leaders should ensure that pupils with vulnerabilities receive high quality and timely support in lessons, ensuring that the adaptations that staff make are appropriate and effective, and allow these pupils to go on to achieve well.
- Leaders should ensure that staff use assessment effectively, to understand the misconceptions that pupils have, and to allow them to adapt future learning to address the gaps identified in pupils' knowledge.

- Leaders should improve the support in place to develop pupils' foundational knowledge in reading and writing, to strengthen their readiness for the next stages of education and/or training.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Active Learning 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), Lynsey Holzer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Claire Heald.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with leaders from the school and the trust, including the principal and the CEO. Inspectors also spoke to several other leaders, as well as a representative from virtual schools.

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.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

There have been several changes to leaders since the time of the previous inspection.

The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils.

Principal: Graham Horn

Lead inspector:

Bessie Owen, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Duncan Ramsey, Ofsted Inspector

Matthew Sammy, Ofsted Inspector

Peter Stonier, His Majesty's Inspector

Julie McBrearty, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 13 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,222

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,758

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

38.42%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.52%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

9.98%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	23.7%	45.2%	Below
2023/24 (final)	27.1%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	24.3%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	34.8	45.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	34.0	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	37.1	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.73	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.65	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	14.6%	25.6%	Below
2023/24 (final)	15.1%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	16.9%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	27.2	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	24.9	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	30.4	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.99	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.11	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	14.6%	52.8%	-38.2 pp
2023/24 (final)	15.1%	53.1%	-38.0 pp
2022/23 (final)	16.9%	52.4%	-35.5 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	27.2	50.3	-23.0
2023/24 (final)	24.9	50.0	-25.1
2022/23 (final)	30.4	50.3	-19.9

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.99	0.16	-1.15
2022/23 (final)	-1.11	0.17	-1.27

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	91%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	92%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	89%	94%	Below

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	34.26	34.99	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	21.20	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	27.29	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	0.3	0.0	Above
2023/24 (revised)	-0.4	0.0	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	9.7%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	11.8%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	13.3%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	26.5%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	34.1%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	42.1%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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