

Inspection of Ixworth High School

Walsham Road, Ixworth, Suffolk IP31 2HS

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April 2025

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Alistair Gibb. This school is part of Sapientia Education 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), Jonathan Taylor, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter Rout.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. Historically, pupils have not achieved well, reflected by weak published outcomes. However, recent changes have resulted in an increased ambition for pupils' achievement. A renewed sense of confidence permeates the school, giving pupils self-belief. This increased aspiration has motivated pupils to work hard. Pupils are now learning well and producing work that is of high quality.

Pupils behave well. They are polite and engaging. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Learning is rarely disrupted. Around school, pupils socialise in an environment that welcomes and includes all. Ixworth is a happy school, where pupils know they are safe and cared for.

Pupils enjoy their timetabled enrichment sessions. They value the chance to learn new skills and develop talents. These include opportunities in sports and the arts. Some pupils learn about gardening and landscaping. Others develop an understanding of business and enterprise. Pupils enthusiastically take on leadership roles. Pupils who attend 'The Forge', the school's specialist provision, are fully integrated into the wider life of the school.

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

The school has overhauled its curriculum. It has clearly set out what pupils should learn and when. Careful thought has been given to how pupils can use what they have previously learned to help them secure new information. The school has ensured that reading is a high priority. Pupils enjoy reading. They know it is important to read widely and develop their vocabulary. Staff support pupils who struggle to read so they become confident and fluent readers.

The school has ensured that it now has specialist teachers, who are experts in the subjects they teach. This means that pupils benefit from clear and rich explanations of new content. Teachers are able to use their subject knowledge to check what pupils know and if they are ready to move on. Teachers quickly spot gaps in pupils' knowledge, including those existing due to weaker provision in the past. Teaching addresses these gaps so pupils can access new learning. Consequently, pupils are able to complete learning activities to a high standard. In most cases, teaching provides pupils with purposeful feedback on these activities. This enables pupils to improve their responses. However, in some subjects, this feedback lacks precision. Here, pupils find it more difficult to improve their work. They do not learn with the depth and richness that they could.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those who attend 'The Forge', are generally well supported. Their needs are swiftly and accurately identified. Detailed information helps staff understand how best to help pupils overcome their individual barriers to learning. Staff typically make well-considered adaptations that enable pupils with SEND to access the curriculum. However, occasionally teaching is not as effectively adapted. In these cases, pupils with SEND find it difficult to successfully complete learning activities to secure new knowledge. Consequently, sometimes pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they could.

The school has clearly defined its expectations for pupil's conduct. These expectations are understood by pupils and staff. Disruption is rare. However, if it does happen, staff are swift and consistent in their response. Through strong intervention and support the school has successfully reduced its rates of absence. Pupils now attend school regularly and more often.

The school has a well-designed personal, social, health and economic education programme. Aligned with the tutor and assembly programme, it provides pupils with important knowledge about key ideas and values. Pupils understand values such as tolerance, respect and democracy. They value diversity and know why certain characteristics should be protected in law. Pupils receive a rich careers programme that prepares them for the next steps of their education. They access a broad spectrum of information about future study and careers. This helps them make informed choices about their next steps.

New leadership has secured significant improvements in a short time. The trust, along with an experienced and knowledgeable trust board, has helped refine thinking and implemented improvement strategies. Staff feel included in the decision-making process and well supported. Staff share the school's vision. They are equally determined to ensure pupils enjoy the best possible educational experience.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, the feedback that staff provide to pupils does not help them improve their work. This means that pupils do not always produce work that enables them to achieve the depth of understanding they could. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to provide purposeful feedback to pupils.
- Sometimes, the adaptations made for pupils with SEND do not enable them to access the curriculum. In these cases, pupils with SEND are not able to complete learning activities and secure knowledge as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff have the expertise to adapt teaching to enable pupils with SEND to achieve as well as they could

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	140047
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10345383
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	528
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Rout
CEO of the trust	Jonathan Taylor
Headteacher	Alistair Gibb
Website	www.ixworthschool.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Sapientia Education Trust. It joined the trust in September 2024.
- The headteacher took up his position in April 2024.
- The school uses one registered and eight unregistered providers of alternative provision.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for up to 18 pupils with SEND. The provision caters for pupils with speech, language and communication needs.
- 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

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.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteachers and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the trust board, including the chair and the trust CEO.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read.
- To further inspect the curriculum, inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work, reviewed curriculum documentation, and reviewed documentation setting out support for pupils with SEND.
- 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, including the free-text comments submitted. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school.

Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rob James

Ofsted Inspector

Teri-Leigh Jones

Ofsted Inspector

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