Students very proud of their new-look academy

By LAUREN ROGERS
lauren.rogers@archant.co.uk

Students at Ormiston Venture Academy marked the official opening of their new £3m facilities with speeches and tours of the brand new school buildings.

The buildings at the school in Greet Road, Gorleston, have been in use since term started last September, but were declared open on Wednesday as invited guests, governors and pupils gathered on the school lawn for a VIP ceremony.

Former pupil Callum Cole, a Graham’s scholar who is now studying fine art at Oxford University, cut the ribbon and said: “As someone who went to the school when it was Greet and Ormiston, I just want to say how much it deserves a building like this so it can carry on with the hard work it’s always done.

The school, part of the Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT) network, opened in September 2013 on the site of the former Greet High.

Speaking at the opening, chairman of governors Lesley King said: “I remember when the old buildings were first built and that was an exciting investment in a technical high school for Great Yarmouth. Now we get to see them transformed for education in the 21st century.

“Some people say that new buildings are a waste of time and a waste of money because what’s important about a school is the people inside. In some ways, Ormiston Venture Academy has proved that to be the case - in old fashioned buildings that weren’t fit for purpose they improved the school and turned it into one of the best in the country.

“But what we have now are buildings that you, the students and staff, deserve. These buildings are ready for the future and excitement of trying out new things and taking even more pride in your work.”

Ormiston has been praised for turning its fortunes around. It became the first sponsored academy in the region to be graded outstanding on every measure by Ofsted inspectors and it recently became the first secondary school in Norfolk to receive a National College for Teaching and Leadership designation, making it one of only four national teacher training schools in the county.

Year 8 student Tiia-Paige Davies, 13, said students had looked forward to being in the new buildings after months of construction last year.

“Before, the corridors were squished but now there’s lots of room. I think all the students are enjoying it, especially after watching all the construction work. We had plans around the school that we could look at and I think it’s turned out better than we’d thought.”

Professor Toby Salt, chief executive officer of OAT, and former principal Nicole McCartney, now national director of performance and partnerships for OAT and executive principal of Ormiston Venture, joined governors, students and current principal Simon Gilbert-Barham at the official opening.

“I’m very proud of Ormiston Venture Academy,” said Professor Salt.

“It’s our most outstanding and special academy. And I know pupils and staff are really proud too.”