

The Oxford Academy

Sandy Lane West, Littlemore, Oxford OX4 6JZ

Inspection dates

28–29 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The vision and strong leadership of the headteacher pervade the school. The ethos of high aspiration this creates is leading to a school which is rapidly improving.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make increasingly strong progress over the course of their time at the school, mostly from low starting points. This is leading to ongoing improvements to pupil outcomes by the end of Year 11.
- Rigorous and valid assessment of pupils' progress means that teachers and leaders know exactly how well pupils are doing. Learning is planned carefully to ensure that pupils make good progress throughout their time at the school.
- Leaders have adapted the curriculum so that it more closely provides for pupils' needs and increasingly prepares them for life after school. As a result, more pupils stay in education or training after they leave school.
- Governors use their skills and expertise to provide effective support and challenge. This ensures that leaders use resources well to bring about school improvement. Governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively, making sure that funding is used carefully and appropriately to improve outcomes for key groups of pupils.
- The 16 to 19 study programme is good and meets the needs of an increasingly wide range of students. Leaders quality assure carefully the off-site provision used by a large range of students, making sure that they are safe and making good progress.
- Students in the sixth form attend school regularly. The attendance of pupils in key stage 3 and 4 is improving rapidly, as a result of the determined work of school leaders.
- School leaders work relentlessly with the small number of pupils who remain persistently absent from school. This is making a difference, with families engaging increasingly with school, but remains a priority for leaders.
- Pupils and students behave well and are respectful of their teachers. Systems are in place to manage the inappropriate behaviour of the minority, and are largely effective.
- Pupils are prepared well for life beyond school. They learn how to stay safe and be effective citizens in modern Britain. They benefit from a range of opportunities that help their wider development.
- Pupils are exceptionally well cared for. Leaders and teachers work beyond what might be expected, in order to keep pupils safe and help them to thrive and succeed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the relentless drive to improve attendance and reduce exclusions, so that all pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, attend regularly and behave as well as the vast majority of pupils currently do.
- Ensure that the most able pupils make even more rapid progress and attain better results by the end of Year 11, by:
 - improving the precision with which teachers' planning builds on their prior learning
 - developing pupils' skills at using teacher feedback to drive their own learning and work with greater independence.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher's clear vision is shared widely by those involved in the life of the school. Staff and governors are determined to provide every opportunity for pupils to achieve their potential, whatever their starting points. High expectations and aspirations sit alongside nurture and support, with pupils' well-being at the heart of everyone's work.
- As a result of focused action, outcomes for pupils are rapidly improving. Pupils now make strong progress from their typically very low starting points. Teachers' ambitions for their achievements are uncompromisingly high.
- Pupils study an increasingly wide range of academic and vocational qualifications, which prepare them well for opportunities beyond school. Leaders monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of learners, and adapt it accordingly.
- Leaders work effectively with a range of experts outside the school to support pupils academically and socially. This is leading to improved parental engagement and improved pupil attendance, although both of these remain a priority moving forward. The large number of families attending the open evening for prospective parents during this inspection indicates the increased confidence that members of the local community have in the school.
- School leaders work in well-coordinated partnership with alternative providers to support a small number of pupils whose needs are not met by the main school curriculum. Pupils who use this provision attend well and make good progress.
- There are clear structures in place to challenge and support staff in improving their practice. Performance management is focused on uncompromising aspirations for the pupils at the school, and provides appropriate help and challenge for individual teachers when necessary.
- Staff say that they feel well supported in developing their practice. A teacher remarked that 'the school is wonderful in developing staff'. Training links closely to the needs of individual staff, based on improving the learning experience for pupils and helping them continue to make strong progress. As a result, teachers continually develop their practice. Newly qualified teachers and staff who are new to the school receive good support and appropriate safeguarding training as part of their induction.
- Opportunities for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are entwined throughout the life of the school. The personal development curriculum is complemented by focused activities in tutor time and assemblies, working with experts from outside the school to deliver key topics and themes. Pupils live among a culture of high expectations, and live up to this challenge.

Governance of the school

- Since the last inspection, the interim executive board has been replaced by a governing body, which utilises expertise from the three organisations which sponsor the school. This has secured the increased effectiveness of governance.
- Governors play an active role in the life of the school. They fulfil their obligations, asking challenging questions to secure their understanding of key priorities within the

school. They work closely alongside middle and senior leaders to verify the information they are given about pupil progress.

- Governors monitor the budget carefully to ensure that it is spent in a way that is having the best impact on outcomes for pupils. They challenge leaders to account for how pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is being used, and monitor the progress of these pupils carefully.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The welfare of pupils is at the heart of the school, and all staff recognise its importance in enabling pupils to be safe and to achieve.
- Clear and appropriate measures are in place to ensure that staff suitability is appropriately checked, and careful records are kept. New staff undertake safeguarding training, and all staff receive regular updates on relevant issues.
- Leaders take action well beyond what is required to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Leaders work with a wide range of experts from beyond the school to support pupils and their families, working in partnership with other local schools. Effective systems are in place to make sure these actions make a difference.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers know their subjects well and plan lessons which help pupils to build on their learning over time. Teachers know their pupils' specific needs, and nurture and challenge them to do well and make good progress.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, meeting their teachers' high expectations. Positive relationships between pupils and teachers contribute to a safe environment where pupils are challenged and supported at the same time. There is a culture of it being acceptable to make mistakes and of learning from them.
- Pupils whose reading, writing and mathematical skills are not strong enough when they arrive at the school receive extra support to improve these aspects of their learning. This helps them to access their work, communicate their understanding and make good progress to catch up. Pupils of all abilities read with fluency appropriate to their age and write in an increasingly sustained way as they progress through the school.
- Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding, during lessons and over time. Where teaching is most effective, questions systematically help pupils to think in a more detailed and sophisticated way.
- Teachers' use of a consistent approach to assessment helps them monitor the progress pupils are making. Leaders check the accuracy of assessment information using support from outside school. This gives leaders confidence about the judgements teachers make about how well pupils are doing, and enables further support to be directed at pupils who need it most.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, produce work which is at the standard that would be expected for their age. However, the care with which this work is recorded varies across different subject areas. At times, the feedback pupils receive about their work is not as effective as it could be in rapidly moving learning on for some pupils, particularly those who are most able.

- Pupils sometimes lack independence, and rely too heavily on direction from their teachers. This prevents their progress from being as rapid as it could be.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Keeping children safe and giving them the best opportunities to be successful are the driving forces of everyone involved in the school.
- Leaders have established a culture across the school that values all pupils equally. Derogatory comments are rare and are dealt with appropriately. Pupils interact sensitively with visitors from the neighbouring school for pupils who have a physical disability, which shows their acceptance of and consideration towards people who are different from them.
- Pupils receive high-quality careers information and guidance, which supports them in preparing for life beyond Year 11. They understand about the range of opportunities available to them, including apprenticeships. As a result, increasing proportions of pupils move on to further education, employment or training each year.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, through their work in different subjects and assemblies. They learn about cyber bullying and how to keep themselves safe online when using social media.
- School staff work closely with experts outside the school to promote pupil welfare. They employ two social workers who provide helpful support to families of pupils at the school. School leaders have maintained links with pupils whom it has been necessary to permanently exclude from the school, so that they are supported until alternative arrangements for their education are in place.
- Pupils take on an active role within their school community, for example by becoming house representatives or members of the student council. They have collaborated in order to develop aspects such as the canteen provision and community use of the school's resources. All pupils are expected to participate in public speaking and sporting activities and attend a play as part of their wider cultural development.
- School leaders have introduced a programme of personal social development education for pupils in key stage 3. It plans to comprehensively link together work carried out during tutor time and in assemblies in relation to the wider aspects of pupils' development. Experts from outside the school work with teachers to make sure that sensitive topics such as child sexual exploitation are taught appropriately.
- Pupils report that there is very little bullying. They describe staff as 'always being there' for them if any problems arise, and say that homophobic bullying 'doesn't happen here'. A very small number of parents do not agree that the school deals effectively with bullying.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils generally conduct themselves well around the site. They are well supervised in corridors and communal spaces, which helps to keep the environment orderly.
- In lessons, pupils are polite and respectful, which creates an atmosphere that helps them to learn. On occasion, when pupils lose focus or do not meet the expectations for

their behaviour, staff respond consistently to manage this in a way that minimises disruption to learning.

- School records show that behaviour is much better than it was at the time of the last inspection. Almost all the staff report that behaviour is at least good, is consistently managed and that leaders support them well in managing difficult behaviour. The small number of parents who responded to the Parent View survey largely support this view.
- Leaders recognise that some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they need to. Leaders are tenacious in their approach to working with families of pupils whose attendance is not good enough. This has helped overall attendance figures to improve, but they are still slightly below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent remains high, but has reduced over the past three years. School staff work hard to decrease the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school, visiting them at home at evenings and weekends to discuss how their attendance can be improved.
- The proportion of pupils who are excluded from school, both for a fixed term and permanently, remains high. This reflects leaders' commitment to ensuring that all pupils adhere to the high expectations for good behaviour. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are overly represented in these statistics. Current school information suggests that the numbers are beginning to decline again, because of the intensive work school staff have done to support these pupils.
- Pupils in alternative provision attend well. Steps are in place so that school leaders are informed immediately if pupils do not attend, as part of effective safeguarding arrangements.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils arrive at the school with starting points which are well below the national average. They make strong progress across a range of subjects by the end of their five years at the school. In 2016, by the end of Year 11, pupils made better progress across a range of subjects than had been the case for pupils nationally in 2015.
- Pupils achieve increasingly well across a range of subjects. The proportion who achieve five or more GCSEs at grade C by the end of Year 11 has more than doubled over the past two years, and is now close to the 2015 national average. This shows the rapid progress that pupils make from their typically very low starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils, who make up more than half of the pupils in the school, make good progress. They do not consistently make as much progress as other pupils in the school, but make better progress than many other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who arrive at the school needing to catch up in English and mathematics are supported well and make good progress. Leaders identify them quickly, and use a range of strategies to help them catch up, both during their lessons and outside class. Their progress is tracked carefully, to make sure that the targeted help they receive makes a difference to their progress.
- The amount of progress that pupils make in English, mathematics and across a range of other subjects is increasing year on year for pupils currently in the school. Fewer pupils in Year 10 are on track to make good progress from their starting points because they are having to catch up from the legacy of less effective teaching that they

experienced when they were lower down the school. Leaders are putting extra help in place earlier than has been the case in the past, so that their achievement is boosted.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make very good progress which helps them to catch up with their peers. Their achievement across a range of increasingly academic qualifications is improving year on year and is now close to that of others in the school.
- Although pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, they do not achieve as well in humanities and languages by the end of Year 11 as they do in other subjects. This is because the curriculum did not previously give them the foundation on which to build their GCSE learning. Leaders have changed the way these subjects are taught at key stage 3 and pupils now make better progress in these subjects as a result.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not all make rapid enough progress from their starting points. This means they do not attain as highly as they should by the end of Year 11. School leaders recognise this as a priority and set suitably aspirational targets for this group of pupils.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders evaluate accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the 16 to 19 study programme, and are acting effectively to improve it. They are ambitious for provision to grow, so that it can meet the needs of an increasing number of young people in the local community.
- A large proportion of students in the sixth form are enrolled on BTEC sports courses as external learners. Their learning is coordinated by a company based at The Oxford Academy and operating in partnership with the school. The external learners do not attend the school site, but are taught at a range of venues such as football clubs in the local area. Staff and leaders from The Oxford Academy quality assure their provision via staff training, safeguarding checks, support with teaching and regular monitoring of learners' progress and attendance.
- Students who study on-site at The Oxford Academy follow an increasingly wide range of courses, most of which are level 3 vocational courses. This provision meets the needs of students who do not meet the entry requirements of other 16 to 19 providers in the local area.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is good. Students work effectively in lessons, and are challenged by their teachers to improve their understanding as well as their independent learning skills. Teachers understand the needs of students in their classes, and plan carefully to meet them. Most students engage purposefully with feedback from their teachers across a range of subjects, which helps them to make increasingly strong progress.
- Students' attendance is good and improving. Leaders have reviewed and developed systems to ensure that attendance is tracked carefully and appropriate action is taken when students do not attend as regularly as they should.
- The quality of careers information and guidance has improved over the past year. Year 12 students reflect on clear support and the range of choices that have helped to meet their needs. Year 13 students were less positive about this aspect of provision. Improvements to careers information and guidance reflect positively in retention rates having improved to be 100% for courses delivered on-site.

- The proportion of students moving on to university has increased over the past three years. This reflects the high aspirations that staff and students have. Visits by local employers and apprenticeship providers support students in being well informed about their next steps at the end of Year 13. Students all complete a period of work experience at the end of Year 12, which often links to their course and career aspirations.
- Students make better progress in vocational qualifications than they do in academic ones, although academic achievements are improving. Disadvantaged students make better progress in academic qualifications than those who are not disadvantaged, but the reverse is true for vocational courses.
- Students are positive about the support they receive from staff. Those who spoke to inspectors said that they would recommend the sixth form to pupils in Year 11. Some felt that tutorial time could be used more effectively to support their independent learning.
- Students who need to improve their achievement in GCSE English and mathematics do not make as much progress as they should by the end of key stage 5. Leaders are aware of this and have responded appropriately, putting specialist teaching in place and reviewing when lessons are taught.

School details

Unique reference number	135675
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10022776

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1648
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	972
Appropriate authority	Oxford Academy Trust
Chair	John Putt
Headteacher	Niall McWilliams
Telephone number	01865 774 311
Website	www.theoxfordacademy.org.uk
Email address	niall.mcwilliams@theoxfordacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 December 2014

Information about this school

- The Oxford Academy is a larger than average-sized mixed academy for pupils aged 11 to 19. It is sponsored by The Oxford Academy Trust, which is comprised of the Diocese of Oxford, Oxford Brookes University and The Beecroft Trust.
- The sixth form accommodates approximately 500 students, most of whom join the school at the end of key stage 4. The vast majority of these learners are completing sports-related courses and are overseen by a company that the school works closely in partnership with. These learners are not educated on the school site, but provision, safeguarding and staff training are quality assured by the school.
- The proportion of pupils who are boys is very high, making up around 70% of the total

number of pupils. This is because of the large number of male key stage 5 students following sports courses via the school's work with an external company.

- More than half of the pupils at the school are eligible for free school meals, which is almost double the national average.
- An above-average percentage of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is slightly below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to the national average.
- The current headteacher was in post at the time of the previous inspection, having taken up his post in January 2014.
- The Hill End Centre and City of Oxford College work with the school to provide alternative provision for a small number of pupils for whom this is appropriate.
- The school complies with DfE guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's floor standards for what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of key stage 4.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 55 lessons across a wide range of subjects. Some of these visits were carried out alongside school leaders. Inspectors also visited a number of tutor sessions and an assembly.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff, including middle and senior leaders. They met with groups of pupils from Year 8 and Year 10 and a group of key stage 5 students. They also spoke to pupils during lesson visits and informally during breaktimes. The lead inspector also met representatives from the governing body, sponsors, trustees and the local authority.
- Inspectors worked alongside school leaders to review a selection of work from pupils in Year 8 and 10 and from a range of key stage 5 students. They also looked at pupils' and students' work during visits to lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's own performance information, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, anonymised performance management information, teaching and learning monitoring records, and information relating to attendance, behaviour and exclusions. Inspectors looked at child protection records and case studies, and checked the school's single central record.
- Inspectors took into account 13 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, including a small number of free-text comments. They also considered 36 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Mark Duke	Ofsted Inspector
Patrick Harty	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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