

King Offa Academy

Downs Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN39 4HS

Inspection dates

7–8 May 2014

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | Good | 2 | |
| Quality of teaching | Good | 2 | |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | Good | 2 | |
| Leadership and management | Good | 2 | |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from starting points that are often lower than is typically found. Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average and rising.
- Governors and senior leaders are ambitious. They have worked successfully since the academy opened to raise expectations and establish an environment, which supports pupils' learning well.
- Teamwork is a strength. Staff are united in their determination to ensure pupils achieve their full potential.
- Pupils are happy and secure and are proud to be part of it. They feel safe and valued as individuals. The academy cares for pupils very well and works effectively to keep them safe.
- Teaching is typically good. Pupils enjoy learning activities that are carefully planned and interesting.
- Good care and effective teaching ensure children settle into the Reception classes quickly and make at least good progress.
- Mutual respect is at the heart of the academy's values. Pupils behave well and show kindness and consideration to others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet typically outstanding throughout the school.
- Occasionally, teaching does not challenge pupils appropriately, particularly the most able pupils.
- Teachers do not always clarify, including through marking, what pupils must do to improve their work.
- The policy for setting homework in Years 1 to 6 is unclear so it does not fully support pupils' learning.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed in 20 lessons and pupils' work was examined in English and mathematics. Some observations were joint visits with the head of school and executive headteacher.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils and two members of the local academy board and the chief executive of Aurora Academies Trust. One meeting with pupils was dedicated to a discussion of reading, with an opportunity for pupils to read aloud.
- Informal discussions with pupils took place at break and lunchtimes. Three assemblies were observed.
- Inspectors took account of the 37 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 29 responses to the staff questionnaire. Parents' involvement in academy life was discussed with senior leaders. Informal conversations were held with parents as they brought their children to school.
- A range of documentation was looked at, including records relating to pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jacqueline White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Keith Homewood

Additional Inspector

Janet Simms

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- In this larger-than-average primary school, the proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average as is the proportion speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school became an academy in September 2012. It is sponsored and run by the Aurora Academies Trust (AAT).
- The head of school was appointed in January 2013. He has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school and works with governors and the executive headteacher to set the strategic direction of the school.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in April 2013. He has responsibility for two other AAT academies and divides his time between the three schools according to need.
- Five new teachers have been appointed since September 2013.
- With the exception of the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement so that it is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - pupils are challenged appropriately in lessons, particularly the most able
 - teachers' guidance to pupils, including thorough marking, clarifies what they must do to improve their work
 - there is a clear policy for the setting of homework in Years 1 to 6 that is shared with parents and implemented consistently.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics because teachers and assistants are effective in tackling any gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills and generally have high expectations.
- Children join the academy with levels of development that are often below those expected. Their communication and language skills are particularly underdeveloped. Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage get the measure of children's needs quickly. Consequently, they enjoy learning and make good, and sometimes excellent, progress in developing their early reading, writing and number skills.
- There has been an effective focus on improving pupils' reading skills. Pupils' skills were below average in the 2013 Year 1 check of their understanding of letters and sounds (often known as phonics). However, better teaching now ensures that Year 1 pupils make good progress with their reading and sustain this as they move up the school.
- Pupils enjoy reading and have good opportunities to read for different purposes. Those that need additional help benefit from tailored reading recovery programmes that strengthen their skills and confidence.
- Standards in writing have been lower than in reading and mathematics. High quality training and development for teachers and assistants have had a positive impact. Pupils practise different types of writing systematically and are now making good progress with these skills.
- The academy reviews the progress of all pupils every half term. Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium are no exception. Staff keep a very sharp eye on their achievement and well-being. The additional funding is used well to boost their learning and personal development. This includes close partnerships with parents so that home and school are united in providing support and encouragement. In 2013, these pupils were about 16 months behind their classmates in reading, 10 months behind in mathematics and six months behind in writing. The academy's reliable data show that these pupils now make the same good progress as their classmates and gaps in attainment have narrowed, particularly in reading.
- Teachers and assistants provide carefully planned support to pupils who need it, both in class and in small withdrawal groups. Consequently, all groups make good progress, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language.
- The most able pupils make good progress; but, in some lessons tasks do not provide enough challenge to enable them to make outstanding progress. As a result, some of these pupils are not realising their full potential.
- Pupils' achievement is not outstanding because teaching is not always strong enough to ensure pupils make rapid, rather than good, progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good. The five new teachers have established themselves quickly and have developed positive relationships with pupils.
- High-quality training for teachers and assistants has focused successfully on improving most pupils' learning experiences.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively to probe and develop pupils' understanding.
- Learning activities are planned thoroughly and supported by high-quality resources that capture pupils' interest.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs learn well because teachers and assistants liaise closely to deliver programmes that support their academic and personal development effectively.

- The organisation of classrooms and displays, including of pupils' work, supports learning very well. Pupils say they feel 'at home' in their classrooms. Routines are established and there are high levels of trust between teachers, assistants and pupils. All of this encourages pupils to persevere with their learning and not be afraid of making mistakes.
- Literacy and numeracy skills develop successfully because a good range of teaching techniques is used to help pupils learn. This was very evident in a fast-paced Years 5 and 6 mathematics lesson where pupils calculated the area and perimeter of shapes. Tasks were stimulating and pupils engaged in creative discussions about the different ways of working things out. Consequently, pupils of all abilities made very fast progress.
- Occasionally, in other work, activities set for pupils are not at the right level and they do not learn to the best of their ability. This is particularly true for the most able pupils.
- There is variation in the quality of marking and in verbal guidance given to pupils. As a result, pupils are not always clear about the next steps they must take to improve their subject skills.
- Homework is set, but teachers have different approaches and expectations. These have not been drawn together into a clear policy that ensures homework always supports pupils' learning appropriately. This has concerned some parents.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and courteous with adults and treat one another with respect. Most are eager to learn and appreciate the support that they get from staff. Comments like 'everybody helps us' and 'you get individual help when you need it' were common during the inspection.
- Very good care and effective adult role models in the Reception classes ensure pupils settle well and are cooperative.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour very well. They use praise and rewards skilfully to encourage pupils. Pupils are aware of the consequences of misbehaviour and this helps pupils to make the right choices.
- Pupils feel valued and are very well looked after. They recognise that their school has improved and they have developed a strong sense of belonging. This is reflected in their considerably improved attendance, which is now above average.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and nearly all parents who responded to the online questionnaire agree with this.
- Incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils are knowledgeable about the different types of bullying, including name calling and racism. They are very confident that staff will deal quickly and effectively with any problems that might arise.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They have a clear understanding of risk, which is underpinned by the emphasis the academy gives to their personal safety.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra activities that the academy offers that helps them to develop their interests and talents as well as social and leadership skills.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because occasionally some pupils lack motivation and need the supervision of teachers and assistants to keep them fully involved in learning.

The leadership and management are good

- The academy is very well led by the executive headteacher and the head of school. The head of school gives clear direction to the work of the academy and has inspired a strong team spirit among the staff.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because, while teaching is improving, leaders have not ensured that it is typically outstanding.
- The performance of teachers is managed well. Underperformance is tackled effectively.

Decisions about the salary that each teacher receives are securely based on the progress made by the pupils in their care.

- The systems for checking the effectiveness of the academy's work are robust. Regular lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and interviews with pupils keep the improvement of teaching a high priority.
- Leaders have secured better teaching, improved attendance, good achievement and a culture of high expectations. This clearly demonstrates ample capacity to keep the academy moving in the right direction.
- The Aurora Academies Trust has provided excellent support to the school. Opportunities for high-quality training and the sharing of expertise between the academies in the trust have been central to the strengthening of leadership and teaching.
- The roles and responsibilities of middle leaders are clear. Alongside senior leaders, they are focused sharply on raising pupils' achievement and drive improvements within their areas of responsibility with increasing confidence and expertise.
- The subjects that are taught and the wide variety of extra activities are well planned and provide pupils with rich opportunities for learning. The school caters for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The primary sport funding has supported specialist coaching for staff and pupils, additional sports clubs and access to competitions. The school has developed the skills of staff effectively. The academy's records show an increase in pupils' involvement in physical activities, with subsequent improvements in their well-being and fitness.
- Parents are very pleased with the improvements they have seen in the last year. Some would like the school's policy for homework clarified. Most of those who completed the online questionnaire and those who spoke with inspectors would recommend the school to others.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The local academy board provides strong support for the work of the academy. Governors' wide range of skills and experience, coupled with their ambition and insight, are channelled successfully into a determined drive for further improvement.
 - Governors know the academy very well. They have a detailed understanding of the quality of teaching and the standards pupils achieve. They know how they compare with other schools. Governors ensure that a close link is maintained between teachers' salaries and their effectiveness. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
 - Governors reflect on their own performance and undertake training in a systematic way to keep their knowledge and skills up to date.
 - Improving pupils' educational experiences is at the heart of governors' prudent financial management. For example, governors know exactly how the pupil premium funding is spent and how well it has benefited pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 138400 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 426374 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 296 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Margaret Pleasants |
| Teacher in charge | James Freeston |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01424 211548 |
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