

Outwood Academy Acklam

Hall Drive, Acklam, Middlesbrough, TS5 7JY

Inspection dates 29–30 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Outstanding leadership by the Academy Trust, governors, and leaders and managers at all levels has ensured that Outwood Academy Acklam is improving rapidly and has the capacity to improve even further.
- High expectations of what students and staff can achieve are helping to build confidence and raise aspirations across the academy. Close monitoring of students' progress, well-targeted extra help for those who need it and high quality training for staff are all combining to raise achievement and improve teaching.
- Students behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They, rightly, feel valued, show respect for staff and are aware of the needs of others, including those who come from backgrounds different from their own.
- Students are kept extremely safe in the academy and, particularly those students who are vulnerable, receive excellent personal support.
- Work in students' books shows that they achieve well as a result of the good teaching they receive. Teachers' good subject knowledge, well-planned lessons and interesting tasks all engage students' interest so they want to learn.
- From starting points which are below average, students make good progress as they move through the academy. Standards improved in 2014, but remained below average. However, progress continues to accelerate and Year 11 students are on track to reach average standards in mathematics and above average standards in English this year.
- A broad curriculum ensures that students are well equipped with basic skills in literacy and numeracy and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness very successfully. A wealth of enrichment activities, trips and visits and special events broaden students' experiences, celebrate their achievements, and help them to believe that all things are possible. Students are, therefore, well prepared for the next steps in their education and for their future lives as citizens of modern Britain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' questioning does not always give students sufficient opportunities to think more deeply and develop their answers fully.
- In a few lessons students are not moved on to more challenging work as soon as they are ready.
- Attendance, although improving, remains below average and the numbers of students who are regularly absent are too high.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons being taught to full classes and smaller groups of students of all ages and in a range of subjects, including mathematics and English. Inspectors and senior staff made many short visits to classrooms together.
- Discussions were held with students, staff, governors and representatives of the Outwood Grange Academies Trust.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work and looked at students’ books, progress data, safeguarding information and other documentation.
- The 30 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered, as well as 37 questionnaires completed by academy staff.

Inspection team

Ann Ashdown, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jim Hall	Additional Inspector
Anne McAvan	Additional Inspector
Barbara Waugh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Outwood Academy Acklam became a sponsor-led academy on 1 September 2013. Its sponsor is the Outwood Grange Academies Trust. When its predecessor school, Oakfields Community College was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require special measures.
- The academy is an average sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and so eligible for the pupil premium is well above that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- The majority of students are White British. An above average proportion of students is from minority ethnic backgrounds, and a well-above average proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- The academy uses alternative provision involving off-site education for students. A small number attend the Parkwood and Ashfield pupil referral units. A further small group of students follow vocational courses at Prior Pursglove College.
- The Chief Executive of the Outwood Grange Academies Trust and the Executive Principal of Outwood Academy Acklam are national leaders of education (NLE) who provide support and expertise to all academies within the trust.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement even further by:
 - ensuring that teachers' questioning consistently gives students opportunities to think more deeply and develop their answers
 - moving all students on quickly to more challenging work as soon as they are ready.
- Further improve attendance and reduce the number of students who are regularly absent by:
 - working even more closely with students and their parents to ensure that they understand the importance of coming to school regularly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Outstanding leadership at all levels has transformed a school which was in special measures into an academy where good behaviour and good teaching are flourishing. Students and staff feel valued and morale is high.
- The performance of staff is managed exceptionally well and the leadership of teaching is very strong. Professional development is of very high quality. Staff relish the opportunities offered to develop their teaching and leadership skills. Consequently, the academy is very well placed to continue to improve rapidly.
- Students who are supported by the pupil premium are monitored very carefully and are given very well-targeted extra support and often one-to-one tuition to help them improve their skills. Some gaps between their achievement and that of other students nationally do remain, but these are now closing quickly.
- The academy promotes equality of opportunity exceptionally well. All students are able to take part in all that the academy offers and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. The way in which students from different cultures work and socialise happily together is testament to how well the academy fosters good relations.
- Middle leaders monitor the work of their subject departments and areas of responsibility extremely thoroughly. Strengths are celebrated and any slight weakness is tackled quickly and effectively.
- The curriculum has a strong and successful focus on promoting students' good basic skills in literacy and numeracy, while also providing a good range of academic and vocational option courses. It also ensures that students receive well-informed careers advice so they can make sensible choices and go on to succeed in the next steps in their education or training. A strength of the curriculum is the wide range of enrichment activities which a large number of students take part in. Pictures of students wearing caps and gowns as they 'graduate' from Year 8, displays of high quality artwork, dramatic productions and after-school clubs ranging from pets' club to dodge ball are just a fraction of the experiences the academy offers. Students leave the academy well prepared for life in modern Britain and with a good understanding of British values, particularly those of tolerance and respect.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective and meet requirements. Staff are extremely well trained and fully aware of, for example, risk assessment and safeguarding issues.
- This academy benefits from the highly skilled leadership of the Chief Executive and Executive Principal, who are both National Leaders of Education (NLE). It also draws upon the high quality combined expertise of subject specialists from across the academy chain.
- Academy staff are very well informed about the progress, attendance and behaviour of students attending alternative provision, because they monitor these rigorously and effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Representatives of the Outwood Grange Academies Trust, particularly the Chief Executive, and the governors (known as the Local Academy Council) work together to oversee the work of the academy. They have exceptional knowledge of the academy's performance data and its strengths and weaknesses. Their knowledge of the quality of teaching is equally high. They manage the performance of staff in an exemplary way and have full understanding of how good performance is rewarded and how weaknesses are tackled. Finances are managed extremely well and all staff are held to account for ensuring that pupil premium funding is spent wisely. Governors ensure that health and safety requirements are met and are of high quality.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Most students have responded well to the very clear system of sanctions and rewards which all academy staff enforce consistently. Students behave well around the building and treat each other, staff and the academy's resources with respect.
- In lessons, students have good attitudes to learning. Classes are managed well by class teachers who are, in turn, supported well by senior staff. They are on hand to intervene and deal with any low-level disruption which occurs occasionally. Work in students' books is well presented and complete and demonstrates the desire students have to succeed.
- Records show that incidents of challenging behaviour are now much fewer and the number of exclusions has reduced.

- Although attendance is improving quickly, it remains too low and while the numbers of students who are regularly absent are being reduced, these are still too high. However, academy staff monitor attendance extremely carefully and the importance of regular attendance is stressed continually to students. In spite of their best efforts, the academy recognises the need to work even more closely with students and their parents to improve attendance further.
- Students are very successfully encouraged to take responsibility and care for others. They collect badges which are earned for completing the academy's 'pledges', which involve developing their own skills and talents as well as helping others.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Staff are highly trained in all aspects of safeguarding and are especially aware of child protection issues. The academy site is very secure. The suitability of staff to work with young people is checked on very carefully.
- Students feel exceptionally safe in the academy. They were particularly keen to tell inspectors how behaviour had improved and that bullying was now rare and dealt with quickly.
- Students are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe. They understand how to stay safe when using the internet and mobile phones and are well aware of the dangers of, for example, drug and alcohol abuse. Students, especially those new to the academy, are taught very well about how to use equipment in laboratories and workshops safely.
- Academy staff provide excellent support to students who need extra personal support. The 'Bridge' provides a very calm and welcoming area, where these students can complete their work and have access to specialist help if they need it. Students who speak English as an additional language receive very good support to help them develop their language skills when this is needed.
- The academy's regular checks on students attending alternative provision indicate that they are kept safe and behave well.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Students make good progress and achieve well because they receive consistently good teaching, including in literacy, reading and mathematics. In some subjects, such as English and art, a small amount of high quality teaching enables students to make even faster progress.
- Work in students' books is of good quality and is usually well presented and complete. Teachers mark work regularly and consistently, so students are clear about how to improve their work and can move forward in their learning. Regular assessments ensure that students' progress is tracked very carefully and extra help is given quickly to any student who is in danger of falling behind.
- Teachers use a range of interesting resources and set varied tasks which capture students' interest. For example, in English students developed good literacy skills and read fluently as they analysed characters in the text, wrote 'killer paragraphs' and assessed their own work against examination requirements.
- In mathematics, teachers' clear explanations and enthusiastic and knowledgeable teaching enabled students to draw distance/time graphs confidently and accurately and calculate the probability of an event.
- Teachers have high expectations of what their students can achieve. They use praise judiciously to build students' confidence and are quick to encourage the class to reward each other's achievements with a well-deserved round of applause.
- Lessons are planned carefully and tailored to the needs of all groups of students. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs receive good support to enable them to complete the same or similar work to that of their peers.
- The pace of learning is slightly slower when teachers' questioning is not as perceptive and does not allow students time to reflect on and extend their answers and think more deeply. Occasionally, students master a task or idea, but are not moved on quickly enough to a new and challenging task which will extend their skills and understanding further.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- From below average starting points when they enter the academy, students make good progress. Work in students' books and the academy's robust tracking data all confirm that current students are achieving well.

- The proportion of students gaining five A* to C GCSE grades, including in English and mathematics, rose to 46% in 2014 and was above floor standards, although below average. However, attainment is rising quickly. Current students in Year 11 are on track to reach above average standards in English and average standards in mathematics this year. Students across the academy are reaching at least average standards in most subjects and previously underperforming subjects, such as mathematics, are improving quickly as a result of better teaching and leadership.
- GCSE results in 2014 were approximately half a grade lower in English and two grades lower in mathematics for disadvantaged students than for other students in the academy and nationally. These attainment gaps are now closing, as are gaps in the progress that students make. Disadvantaged students are making good progress.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs receive very well-targeted support from teachers and teaching assistants to enable them to make good progress. Expert tuition for students who speak English as an additional language allows them to develop good language skills and become fluent readers.
- The most able students make good progress. They receive specialist tuition in small groups where they are provided with more challenging work to enable them to reach the highest grades in examinations.
- The academy does not enter students early for examinations.
- The academy's monitoring shows that students who attend alternative provision make expected progress.

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

Unique reference number	139823
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	450051

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	860
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ralph Pickles
Principal	Mark Hassack with Robert Tarn (Executive Principal), Sir Michael Wilkins (Chief Executive)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01642 818200
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