

Olive Ap Academy – Thurrock

Leicester Road, Tilbury RM18 7AX

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders and the multi-academy trust (MAT) have worked exceptionally hard and effectively to deal with the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection.
- The interim progress board (IPB) has a strong and accurate understanding of how well pupils are doing. Continual improvements to the quality of leadership and consequently to pupils' achievement have been secured.
- The curriculum is well balanced. It combines a good mix of academic subjects with activities and experiences which help pupils to develop their social and life skills.
- The quality of teaching and assessment across the school is now good. Teachers capture pupils' interest well with exciting and relevant activities.
- Teachers pay careful attention to pupils' individual needs. They plan learning to ensure that it is carefully personalised.
- Once pupils are settled, their progress accelerates strongly. Most of them start to do well in English, mathematics and their other subjects.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is good because additional funding is spent effectively to help them make good progress.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is good. Strong leadership and good support from staff ensure that these pupils make good progress.
- Senior leaders and staff work hard to raise the aspirations of pupils who may not have had positive previous experiences of school.
- Pupils' welfare and their personal development are given a high priority. Pupils behave well in lessons, enjoy class discussions and take pride in their work.
- Pupils who completed Year 11 in the summer of 2018 all moved on to appropriate further education courses.
- Attendance is improving because learning is more interesting and teaching has improved.
- A small minority of pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should.
- The level of challenge for pupils of different abilities is not always as high as it could be.
- Middle leaders make an important contribution to the school's improvement, but the roles of newer staff are underdeveloped.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop leadership and management by strengthening the work of middle leaders who are new in post through the trust's senior leadership coaching programme.
- Improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning by planning learning that provides challenge for all pupils and promotes fully their knowledge and understanding.
- Raise attendance by developing closer links with parents and carers, and convincing them and their children of the strong connection between attendance and achievement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- When the school was inspected in January 2017, it was judged to require special measures. At subsequent monitoring inspections, Her Majesty's Inspectors judged that leaders and managers were taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.
- The MAT and headteacher understood what needed to be done to make this a good school. Consequently, the headteacher and her strong leadership team quickly addressed its significant weaknesses. Inconsistencies in safeguarding, the management of pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching have been resolved.
- In the past, turbulence due to changes in staffing had an unfavourable effect on pupils' progress. The MAT has been very effective in appointing suitably qualified, new staff to teaching and leadership roles. This has stabilised the school and improved the quality of teaching and leadership.
- The headteacher receives strong support from the chief executive officer (CEO) of the MAT. The CEO visits the school regularly and works closely with the headteacher and senior leaders. He is knowledgeable and realistic about the improvements that have been made, as well as the areas that require further development.
- Leaders, the IPB and the MAT also have an accurate picture of the strengths of the school and what areas need more work. The school development plan is used effectively to plan and monitor improvement priorities.
- Senior leaders have created a culture of respect throughout the school. They are ambitious for all pupils to succeed. Pupils who have not always had positive experiences in their previous schools develop trust and respect for staff. They appreciate the opportunity to express their views and that their views are valued.
- Staff morale is good. Teachers recognise the improvements made and feel proud to be part of the school. They are supportive of leaders. They work effectively with pupils to provide them with a high level of care and help them to achieve well.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and assessments effectively. This includes regular observations of teaching and looking at pupils' work. Leaders recognise the importance of staff training, and adults at all levels are given opportunities to improve their skills.
- The curriculum contributes well to pupils' improved attendance, better outcomes and good personal development. There is an appropriate breadth of subjects in key stages 3 and 4, with additional support available for those pupils who need further intervention.
- The outdoor learning and personal development curriculum both contribute well to promoting pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence and give them useful life skills. This enables pupils to achieve a range of academic and vocational qualifications appropriate to their different abilities and interests.
- The daily reflection meeting ensures that there is good communication between leaders, staff and pupils about what has happened that day. Pupil achievement is celebrated and valued by all, ensuring a positive end to the day.

- The school makes good use of its pupil premium funding and as a result disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Additional support to improve pupils' literacy skills is helping them to achieve better in all subject areas.
- Leaders are determined that pupils have the best opportunity to develop into good citizens. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain because the school promotes British values, including respect and tolerance for different faiths and cultures, well.
- Parents are highly supportive of the work the school does. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, or spoke to inspectors during the inspection feel that the school is well led and managed. They said that their children are safe, well looked after and taught well. One parent stated, 'This has been the saving of my son and will be the making of him.'
- The improvements made to the quality of provision and outcomes since the MAT took over the leadership and management of the school indicate that there is good capacity for further improvement.
- The local authority has supported the school in improving the quality of teaching and securing strong leadership by attending interim progress board meetings.
- School leaders have worked with local schools, resulting in improvements in the quality of teaching. This partnership is effective in improving the role of teachers and ensuring the accuracy of their assessments. Teachers working in this small school have relatively few chances to work collaboratively with other teachers.
- Some middle leaders are new to their post. At this stage, their roles and responsibilities in school improvement are underdeveloped. Senior leaders recognise that they will need further support to advance in their roles.

Governance

- The IPB has worked effectively with leaders to secure sustained improvements. Board members have extensive experience and understanding of education and ensure robust scrutiny of the reports submitted by leaders.
- The IPB is highly ambitious for the school. It shows a strong knowledge and understanding of how well the school is doing and the progress it has made. Members robustly question and challenge senior leaders and have an accurate understanding of how teachers' performance is managed.
- Careful attention is paid to improving safeguarding, attendance, and teaching and learning. Where teaching has not been good enough, staff have either responded to the support provided by the school or have moved on.
- The IPB has made sure that money is spent appropriately to support particular groups of pupils. The impact of this support is clearly seen through the accelerating progress of these groups of pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders have implemented rigorous procedures for the safe recruitment of staff.

They record accurately details of all required checks on staff suitability to work with children, on a single central register.

- All staff receive training in the school's procedures for identifying, recording and resolving child protection concerns. Senior leaders work effectively with external agencies to provide support for pupils experiencing mental health difficulties. All staff are very aware of the social and emotional changes faced by individual pupils; they work tirelessly to overcome these.
- Senior leaders have created a safe environment in which previously reluctant learners feel secure and are able to focus on their learning. Staff are highly aware of the possible safeguarding risks to pupils, such as exposure to drug abuse, knife crime and sexual exploitation. Staff work well together to identify any pupils who may feel vulnerable.
- The vast majority of pupils who were spoken to during the inspection said that they feel safe and could talk to an adult in school who would help them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Over the last year, the quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly. Teachers have high expectations and a clear understanding of pupils' starting points. Staff expect pupils to apply themselves and to concentrate for extended periods of time, and most of them do. Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects.
- Teachers have a detailed knowledge of the learning needs of each individual in each of the small classes. They respond flexibly and appropriately to pupils' changing needs. They plan carefully so that in each lesson, teaching builds up pupils' knowledge and skills and leads to the next stage of their learning.
- Staff have positive relationships with pupils. They have successfully created a culture where most pupils are ready to learn. Teachers use these relationships effectively to engage pupils in their learning. The vast majority of pupils are eager to meet teachers' high expectations.
- The development of reading and writing in all subjects is good. These basic skills are specifically built in to all lessons. Extended writing opportunities are clearly a strength of the school and support the development of pupils' literacy. Pupils have good opportunities to practise their writing in a range of contexts. This supports their good progress in all subjects.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to sustain pupils' interest in learning. They encourage pupils to work with positive attitudes so that they learn from their mistakes and are keen to improve. Scrutiny of pupils' exercise books shows that they take pride in their work. Work in their books is neatly presented.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are provided with the support they need to achieve well. One pupil expressed the views of many saying, 'Teachers don't give up on us.'
- Pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well through regular opportunities to discuss and debate issues with partners or in small groups. They enjoy working together and willingly cooperate and share ideas to learn from each other.

- Associate tutors are used effectively to provide personalised care and therapy, and to support pupils' vocational and behavioural needs. This promotes pupils' progress well by providing them with the relevant skills and attributes needed to learn new concepts.
- Procedures to measure progress in all subject areas are systematic. Leaders moderate the assessments of pupils' work with other schools in order to check the accuracy and validity of their assessments. Teachers are given the opportunity to work with colleagues in other schools to sharpen their practice.
- Pupils who attend other providers for some of the week benefit from those learning environments and receive the support they need to make progress. The school receives detailed information about their progress every week.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff successfully motivate pupils to share a common sense of purpose that 'all challenges can be overcome.'
- Pupils are delighted with the school and the opportunities provided for them. They can see the improvements in the school since the last inspection and speak proudly of these developments. They also say how these experiences have improved their personal and social development.
- Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These include sports, revision clubs, cooking club and the 'chicken club project'. Pupils also visit the theatre, go on field trips and attend cadets. External speakers are welcomed into school to give talks on mental health and well-being.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The vast majority of pupils say that they feel completely safe in school. They are well informed about risks associated with the use of the internet, knife crime, gang culture, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation or extremism.
- Staff encourage pupils to discuss their concerns. Staff are skilled at finding out what is wrong and helping pupils to resolve issues so that they can continue in learning. One pupil reflected on the impact of this strategy, saying, 'The school does help us. They want us to succeed and to get us back into mainstream school.'
- Staff place a strong emphasis on pupils' well-being. Pupils receive a substantial level of support where necessary. This may involve guidance from associate tutors, the school counsellor, social workers or more specialised help from outside agencies. A home-school support practitioner has recently been appointed to support this aspect of the school's work.
- There are good arrangements in place to support pupils' transition into and out of the school. When they join and leave, an induction period is planned for them. This approach effectively supports each pupil's personal development and welfare during a potentially very stressful period.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, pupils behave well. They are usually punctual to lessons, cooperative and ready to learn. Behaviour around the school is orderly and calm. Pupils wear their uniforms with pride.
- Pupils respect displays of work around the building and value the learning environment; there is no litter. They demonstrate confidence when meeting visitors and are polite and welcoming. They get on well together in lessons and during social time.
- Pupils' behaviour is well managed. Pupils quickly learn what is expected of them. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils say that they really like their teachers and that they can always find someone to talk to or help them.
- The school monitors behaviour very effectively. Detailed records are kept of any incidents. Parents, staff and pupils have full confidence in the school's procedures.
- The school's records show that incidents of unacceptable behaviour and temporary exclusions have fallen. There have been no permanent exclusions this year. Improvements in pupils' behaviour have enabled more pupils to re-integrate into secondary schools in the past year.
- Action to improve attendance has been effective. These improvements show how much pupils like school. For many pupils, this also represents strong improvement in their attitude towards education. However, a small minority of pupils still do not attend regularly enough.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school has worked relentlessly over the last year to boost the achievement of all groups of pupils in all subjects. This is now showing impact.
- Pupils make good progress from their below-average starting points. Most pupils have had negative experiences of school, and many have had significant periods of absence.
- Pupils take time to adjust positively to the faith shown in them by staff. All staff demonstrate patience and persistence in encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, ensuring that they achieve good outcomes.
- Assessment information and records of teaching and learning indicate that pupils make good progress over time. A book scrutiny during the inspection confirmed this. The strongest progress is in English. During the inspection, pupils were regularly observed working hard and progressing well throughout each English lesson.
- Currently, most pupils have made at least good progress in external examinations in English and mathematics from their low starting points. Assessment records demonstrate that the majority are on target to achieve additional awards in vocational subjects in preparation for working life.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils in their class. This is due to the effective extra support provided for them through pupil premium funding. As a result, these pupils make good progress in English and mathematics.

- Pupils with SEND make good progress. This is a result of improvements to teaching, careful checking of their progress and sharply focused additional help to address any underperformance.
- Several pupils arrive at the school with a low level of literacy skills. Most of them demonstrate good progress in their reading and comprehension across a range of subjects. Work in pupils' books shows good development of legible handwriting and extended pieces of writing.
- Most leavers secured qualifications in English and mathematics, together with additional qualifications, in 2018.
- The very small number of pupils who attend alternative provision for part of the week are carefully monitored for attendance and make good progress with their courses. This builds their self-esteem and skills for future employment.
- The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education or employment. All those who completed Year 11 in 2018 moved on to further education. The careers adviser provides them with good guidance and support. Pupils are helped to select appropriate further education courses which meet their needs and interests.
- Pupils do not always achieve as well as they can. This is because they are not always given sufficiently challenging tasks. At times, the level of challenge provided is not sufficient to ensure that the most able pupils achieve the high standards of which they are capable. The objectives teachers identify for each lesson do not always require these pupils to attain higher-level skills and understanding.

School details

Unique reference number	140861
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10052558

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Paul Griffiths
Headteacher	Eileen Hinds
Telephone number	01708 853781
Website	http://apthurrock.oliveacademies.org.uk/
Email address	info.thurrock@oliveacademies.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 January 2017

Information about this school

- Since April 2015, the school has been sponsored by the Olive Academies Trust. The predecessor school was a maintained provision under the authority of the local authority.
- The school moved to a new site in Tilbury in June 2017. It provides education for a cohort of secondary-aged pupils aged 11 to 16 years. The school no longer provides education for primary-aged pupils.
- The school provides short-term education and support to pupils who are vulnerable to exclusion or who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools.
- Pupils typically enter the school with achievement significantly below the national average or after an extended period without formal education.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for additional funding is well above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The school currently uses three alternative providers. These are Circles (farm), Circles (trade) and Time Services.
- The school does not receive any Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding.
- No pupils access home tuition.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school was placed in special measures in January 2017. On the first day of the inspection, inspectors decided the school no longer requires special measures and converted it to a section 5 inspection.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and staff. Inspectors also met with the CEO of the trust, trust representatives, as well as the chair of the IPB and three other members of the board.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, minutes of IPB meetings, safeguarding records, pupil-progress information and school policies and procedures. The lead inspector also considered evidence gathered during the first, second and third monitoring inspections in October 2017, April 2018 and July 2018, which resulted in letters on the Ofsted website.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across both key stages. All observations and learning walks were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors completed a work scrutiny and met formally with two groups of pupils. They also spoke informally to pupils during the school day to ensure a balanced view of opinions was considered.
- Inspectors used existing evidence on Parent View and contacted several parents by telephone to gain their views of the school. Furthermore, inspectors questioned a number of staff about the provision and took into account the results of an internal staff questionnaire.
- Telephone conversations were held with two leaders of the alternative providers used by the school and a representative of the local authority.

Inspection team

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sue Cox	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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