

# Offa's Mead Academy

Beachley Road, Sedbury, Chepstow, Gloucestershire NP16 7DT

## Inspection dates

11–12 December 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Inadequate</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Inadequate</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Inadequate</b>
Early years provision	<b>Inadequate</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- The school's performance has declined significantly since the previous inspection. There is limited leadership capacity. Leaders have not remedied the school's weaknesses.
- The culture of safeguarding is weak. Governors have not fulfilled their statutory duties. Leaders have not ensured that all staff understand and follow the school's policies.
- The school's curriculum fails to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Too few pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- School leaders have not ensured that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to support pupils' academic and emotional development.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not well supported. Until very recently, the school did not comply with the SEND Code of Practice.
- Leaders have failed to carry out sufficient checks on the quality of teaching and provide teachers with the guidance they need. Consequently, teachers' expectations are too low, and pupils make inadequate progress.
- Underachievement is widespread, and standards are too low.
- Attendance rates are below the national average. Too many pupils are persistently absent from school. Fixed-term exclusions have been high.
- Teaching is inadequate. Consequently, pupils make insufficient progress from their different starting points.
- Leaders do not use accurate assessment information to ensure that pupils make enough progress. This holds too many pupils back.
- Pupils and parents express concerns about the management of behaviour.
- Teaching in the early years does not prepare children adequately for Year 1.

### The school has the following strengths

- Current leaders are starting to take some of the right actions to bring about improvement.
- Additional sport funding is used effectively.
- Children settle quickly into the early years.
- Parents recognise improvements made by new leaders.

## Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - there is an effective safeguarding culture throughout the school so that statutory duties are met, and pupils feel safe in school
  - governance is improved so that governors fulfil their statutory duties and are more robust in holding school leaders to account for raising standards and improving teaching and learning
  - leadership capacity in the school is increased to bring about swift and sustained improvement, particularly in teaching, learning and pupils' progress
  - thorough checks on teaching and improved guidance equip teachers with the skills necessary to assess pupils' learning accurately
  - the curriculum meets statutory requirements, is used to develop pupils' knowledge and skills across a broad range of subjects and prepares them well for the next stage of their education and life in modern Britain
  - pupils with SEND receive the support they need to make good progress
  - the pupil premium is used effectively to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and children of service families.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including in the early years, so that all pupils make at least good progress by ensuring that teachers:
  - receive accurate feedback on their practice to improve their teaching
  - make accurate assessments and use these to consistently plan work that fully meets pupils' needs
  - have sufficiently high expectations of pupils' achievement
  - implement leaders' guidance to ensure that no learning time is wasted
  - eliminate underachievement and raise standards of attainment.
- Improve the quality of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare urgently by ensuring that:
  - pupils feel safe and are safe in school
  - all members of staff follow the school's behaviour policy
  - overall attendance improves, persistent absence reduces, and the number of fixed-term exclusions decline.

An external review of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be

undertaken to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Leaders have failed to stem the decline in pupils' progress. Significant turmoil in staffing and a high turnover of staff have hindered school improvement. Although trust leaders have intervened to bring about stability in staffing, this has failed to remedy weaknesses in the school's work over the last two years.
- The trust has not been effective in supporting improvement in the school. Trust leaders recognise that the school is providing an inadequate education. While some decisive action has been taken to remedy staffing issues, overall the trust's actions aimed at improvement have not been implemented quickly enough.
- Leaders have failed to hold teachers to account for the decline in standards. Checks on teaching are not leading to better quality teaching and learning. Leaders' guidance to teachers has been ineffective. Because of these weaknesses, teaching is not bringing about improvements in pupils' progress.
- Although leaders have introduced planning structures for the teaching of reading and writing, they do not ensure that teachers follow these systems. As a result, pupils are underachieving.
- Leaders' systems for gathering teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are not robust. Although there has been some moderation of standards with teachers in other schools, leaders have not done enough to ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate.
- Leaders have failed to promote equality of opportunity for all pupils, who are not receiving the support they need. In addition, staff have been deprived of clear guidance about national expectations. For example, until the arrival of the new special educational needs leader (SENCo), teachers were unaware of and therefore not complying with the special educational needs and disability code of practice.
- The leader of the provision for pupils with SEND is new to the role. She has made teachers aware of external advice where pupils have specific learning needs. She has also supported teachers in devising plans to support pupils in overcoming barriers to their learning. However, it is too soon to see any significant impact of this work, which is being hampered by weak teaching.
- Leaders' use of pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils and those children of service families has not supported improvements in pupils' academic development.
- Of the 17 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, most would not recommend the school. However, parents who spoke with inspectors recognise that 'things are beginning to improve'. They are particularly appreciative of the new executive headteacher's work to improve pupils' behaviour and communication.
- Leadership of the curriculum is poor. Until September 2018, the school's curriculum had little or no structure and coherence. Leaders have now introduced a curriculum framework to ensure that teachers cover a range of subjects. However, leaders accept that gaps remain and are not fulfilling their statutory obligation to teach a broad and

balanced curriculum. For example, the school does not teach modern foreign languages.

- Leaders have not ensured that the school's curriculum provides enough support or challenge for pupils to make sufficient progress.
- The school's curriculum does not promote pupils' understanding of British values, nor spiritual, moral, social and cultural education effectively.
- Changes in teaching staff have hindered leaders in establishing improvements to the quality of teaching across the school. The trust's recent actions, however, have stabilised staffing.
- The recruitment of middle leaders to lead on behaviour and English are too recent to have had any significant impact. Trust leaders are making sure that new and inexperienced leaders receive the right training and support from within the trust to be able to make a difference to pupils' learning.
- The leadership of mathematics has been in place for just over a year. This is reflected in more effective curriculum provision within mathematics. However, the leader has not had sufficient opportunities to make close checks on how effectively the mathematics scheme of work is being followed. Consequently, weak teaching in mathematics still exists for some pupils.
- The additional primary physical education and sport funding is used well. It has been used to develop staff skills and has improved pupils' engagement and enjoyment of sport.
- Inspectors recommend that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors have not fulfilled their statutory duties. For example, safeguarding is ineffective. Their checks have been too limited. Consequently, they have not understood the extent of the school's weaknesses.
- Governors accept that they have failed to ensure that the expenditure of additional funding has a positive impact on the progress and well-being of eligible pupils.
- Governors have taken some action to tackle aspects of the school's many weaknesses. For example, in recent months, the trust has provided the school with expertise to support improvement. However, this additional support has not bolstered leadership and teaching capacity sufficiently and governors' actions have failed to remedy weaknesses swiftly enough.
- Additional support provided by the trust has begun to tackle some weaknesses in safeguarding. Similarly, trust leaders have supported the establishment of appropriate schemes of work for teachers to follow in the core subjects. However, leaders recognise that the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements. For example, the trust expectations are that schools follow the national curriculum and it currently does not do so.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective.
- There is a poor culture of safeguarding across the school. Pupils do not feel safe in school because of the attitudes and behaviour of others. Parents expressed several concerns about their children's safety and well-being although they recognise that 'things are much better this term'.
- Systems for reporting and recording safeguarding concerns are not fit for purpose. Although leaders have provided staff with the appropriate training, the approach to passing on and acting on concerns is woefully inadequate.
- The processes for staff appointments meet requirements. Leaders carry out sufficient checks during the recruitment of staff and volunteers. However, although leaders provide staff with training, too little is done to ensure that all staff are secure in their understanding of their obligations to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders have begun to resolve some of the school's safeguarding issues. However, the large number of concerns and the lack of leadership capacity in the school have resulted in leaders having to prioritise and react to urgent issues rather than creating and embedding a strong safeguarding culture in the school. For example, improved systems for monitoring which pupils should be getting on the school bus at the end of the school day have been introduced after an incident where a child was put on the bus by mistake. In addition, fences are being erected around the school to improve the site security.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Inadequate

- High turnover in staffing and little direction from leadership in the past have resulted in weak teaching, learning and assessment. Where new staff are in place, they have not been able to remedy previous gaps in pupils' learning. Therefore, too many pupils are not well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The legacy of weak teaching and assessment evident over the last two years has led to significant gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Current teachers are still trying to 'unpick' the significant gaps in pupils' learning. When planning lessons, teachers do not have an accurate knowledge of what pupils can and cannot do. As a result, pupils do not develop their knowledge, understanding or skills as well as they should.
- Teachers in some classes do not have a clear understanding of curriculum expectations. This is compounding gaps in pupils' learning. Teachers plan work for pupils which is sometimes too easy or too hard and because of this weakness pupils make inadequate progress.
- Teachers do not deploy teaching assistants effectively. This contributes towards pupils not receiving the right support and encouragement they need to progress.
- Teaching for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND does not meet their needs. Teachers do not follow the precise steps agreed with the SENCo so that pupils can be successful in their learning.

- The teaching of mathematics has improved in recent months. Teachers are setting work which is better matched to national curriculum expectations. However, the legacy of previously weak teaching has led to significant gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is weak. Although teachers have received support from other leaders in the trust, teachers' weak use of assessment information hinders pupils' progress in reading and writing.
- The current teaching of phonics varies widely across different groups. It does not make amends for previously identified weaknesses or strengths in pupils' acquisition of phonic knowledge in some groups. Where pupils have an accurate understanding, and where they are required to carry out work pitched at the same level of difficulty as those pupils who are struggling, their time in lessons is wasted, they finish early and become bored.
- The teaching of reading is showing signs of improvement in some year groups. For example, pupils' reading ages in Year 6 have increased by up to eight months in three calendar months. However, this is not enough to compensate for pupils' underachievement. Across the school, books and activities are not well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils complete reading comprehension tasks although they do not have the skills to be able to follow the text, while others are asked to read books that are too easy for them. This is hampering the progress that pupils make.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Inadequate

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. The shortcomings in safeguarding mean that the school's work to promote pupils' welfare is ineffective.
- Although leaders do engage other agencies to support the pupils most at risk, work to help the rest of the pupils to feel safe is ineffective. A new system to record concerns was introduced in September 2018 but inspectors discovered several unreported incidents.
- Leaders' recent work to improve behaviour and eliminate bullying has led to pupils having a better understanding about bullying, what it is and how to prevent it. However, pupils say that bullying occurs. They have little faith in some support staff to deal with this effectively. The school's record system does not reflect the number of incidents pupils and parents describe.
- Routines at breakfast and after-school clubs do not ensure pupils' safety and well-being.
- Despite the weaknesses in teaching and safeguarding, many pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. This is especially the case where teachers articulate their expectations clearly. For example, where teachers' expectations are higher, for example in Years 5 and 6, pupils take pride in their learning.
- New leaders' introduction of the 'Learning Lab' is enabling pupils who struggle in class to receive a more bespoke support in a small group. As a result, these pupils achieve

more. However, some teachers do not take responsibility for this group of learners so that when pupils return to class, teachers do not check what they can or cannot do. Therefore, pupils' progress stalls and their behaviour deteriorates.

- Despite these shortcomings, inspectors did observe orderly environments and positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils appreciate the new equipment at lunchtimes and say the playground 'zoning' has made lunchtimes safer.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Attendance is low across the school and too many pupils are persistently absent.
- Some pupils behave well and demonstrate caring attitudes towards one another, staff and visitors. These pupils are frustrated when others disrupt lessons. Pupils commented that, 'Teachers need help to manage children whose behaviour is disruptive.'
- Published information shows that the number of fixed-term and repeat exclusions have been high over time. In addition, current leaders recognise that the school's current records of incidents of poor behaviour are unreliable. A new system of recording and reporting incidents and issues introduced in September is yet to be fully embedded across the school. Parents and pupils express concerns about the school's management of pupils' behaviour.
- Senior leaders have implemented a new policy for behaviour management this term. However, the approach is new and not all staff are following leaders' advice. Consequently, learning continues to be disrupted in too many classes.
- Pupils say that the new reward system leaders have introduced is encouraging more pupils to be good in lessons but that it does not work for the children with the most challenging behaviour.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Inadequate

- Pupils' underachievement is widespread. The progress pupils make is consistently low and shows little improvement. The current quality of teaching is not enabling pupils to catch up. The school's own information about the progress pupils are making shows that too few of the pupils in school are making the progress that the trust deems acceptable.
- Pupils who had previously average attainment, the most able, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND all make insufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Too few pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stage in their education. In 2018, only half the pupils in Year 6 left the school with the skills they need to achieve well in secondary school in reading, writing and mathematics combined.
- The work in the books of current pupils indicates that although attainment improved in mathematics to be broadly in line with the national average at the end of Year 2 last year, pupils this year have regressed in their skills, knowledge and understanding.



- Nevertheless, pupils' attainment in mathematics is showing signs of improvement in some year groups, particularly where pupils are expected to use and apply their mathematical knowledge. However, gaps in pupils' basic number knowledge remain and these prevent too many pupils from making sufficient progress.
- Similarly, although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was broadly in line with the national average last year, pupils have not sustained this standard. Pupils' reading and writing does not reflect an accurate grasp of phonic knowledge.
- Pupils' attainment in reading has been below the national average and declining at both key stages 1 and 2 for the last two years. Pupils make too little progress in reading. Pupils who had previously average attainment in reading are slipping further behind. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not read with the accuracy or understanding they should.
- Pupils' writing skills are not developed well in English or across the curriculum. Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are often repeated. Work in books shows that Years 5 and 6 are making better progress in writing than in other year groups. However, because of poor teaching, learning and assessment over time, these pupils are not reaching a high enough standard and are not achieving as they should be.
- Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well. Current work in books reflects little sign of improvement. Additional funding has not been used effectively to target barriers in pupils' social, emotional or academic development.
- The curriculum plan which leaders have put into place since September is aimed at ensuring that the school provides pupils with a broader curriculum. However, the lack of previous teaching in humanities and science has left significant gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.

### Early years provision

### Inadequate

- Historically, too few children have left the early years well prepared for Year 1. In 2018, standards declined even further, with only three in 10 children reaching a good level of development (the standard expected for their age). This does not represent good progress from children's different starting points.
- The teaching staff assessment of children's abilities often lacks accuracy. This hinders teachers' ability to support children's development. Consequently, children do not make the necessary gains in their learning.
- The early years team are new. Leaders have supported the new staff to develop an early years curriculum that meets statutory requirements. Teaching staff work hard to ensure that there is a wide variety of enjoyable activities for children to engage in throughout the school day. However, the activities provided often lack challenge and are not matched closely enough to children's different abilities. Consequently, children's progress is hindered.
- The teaching of writing has been weak over time. Currently, the leader is supporting teaching staff effectively so that all children apply the correct pencil grip when mark-making. However, teaching does not support children's accurate letter and number formation. This holds back children's progress. While the most able pupils who could

write their name before they came to school continue to make progress, other, less confident, children do not make the progress they could.

- Current school leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the early years provision. Previous inadequacies around the safeguarding of children in the early years have been tackled. Both the indoor and outdoor environments provide children with a safe place to learn.
- Children enjoy working and playing together. They behave well in the early years and develop strong friendships. Children quickly learn school routines which help them settle into school life.
- Parents recognise improvement in the Reception class this year. They value the approachability of staff.

## School details

Unique reference number	138786
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10082583

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jack Boyer
Principal	Rosalind Escott
Telephone number	01291 622932
Website	<a href="http://www.offasmeadacademy.org">www.offasmeadacademy.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:contactus@offasmeadacademy.org">contactus@offasmeadacademy.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2014

## Information about this school

- Offa's Mead is smaller than the average-sized primary school, comprising six classes. One class has a mixed-aged year group with Years 4 and 5.
- There have been significant staffing changes since the last inspection. An acting executive headteacher has been in place since May 2018 (three days per week). Additional leaders have been brought in by the trust to bolster the leadership of SEND (two days a week) and the early years (one day per week).
- The school became part of the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) in September 2012. AET multi-academy trust is comprised of 57 schools across seven regions of the UK. The overarching responsibility for governance of the group's academies lies with the group's board of trustees. Day-to-day responsibilities for challenge, support and intervention are delegated by the trustees to a local governing board.
- The academy is situated in Chepstow, close to Beachley Barracks. The academy draws 40% of its pupils from the families of service personnel based at the barracks. As a

result, the proportion of pupils eligible for the extra funding provided for children of service families is above average.

- Most pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for SEND is above average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is broadly average.
- A high proportion of pupils start at the academy after the early years foundation stage, and they often join part-way through the school year. Many pupils also leave part-way through the school year.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors jointly observed pupils' learning in visits to lessons across the school with senior leaders.
- Inspectors and senior leaders jointly examined the quality of work in pupils' English, mathematics and topic books alongside the school's curriculum plans.
- An inspector talked with a group of pupils to seek their views about the school. Inspectors also listened to the views of many pupils during lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders. An inspector met with the chair of the local governing board and held a telephone conversation with AET's phase director.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 2, 3 and 4.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; information about pupils' achievement; records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance; minutes of meetings of the governing board and the school's website.
- An inspector visited the breakfast and after-school club.
- Inspectors spoke with parents in the playground on both days before school. They also took account of the 17 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and free-text message responses.

## Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Marion Borland

Ofsted Inspector

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