

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



28 January 2019

Mr Mark Hassack
Executive Principal
Outwood Academy Acklam
Hall Drive
Acklam
Middlesbrough
TS5 7JY

Dear Mr Hassack

No formal designation inspection of Outwood Academy Acklam

Following my visit with Claire Brown, Senior Her Majesty's Inspector, Malcolm Kirtley, Her Majesty's Inspector and Patricia Stevens, Ofsted Inspector to your academy on 9 January 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out at no notice because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the behaviour management of and support for vulnerable pupils who display challenging behaviour.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the chief executive officer (CEO) of Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT), the chair of the local academy council, other leaders from the trust and the school, and a group of teachers. A telephone conversation was held with the local authority's virtual headteacher. Inspectors also held meetings with four groups of pupils and observed pupils at break and lunchtime. Inspectors made brief visits to lessons. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. The school development plan, the self-evaluation document and other documents relating to behaviour, exclusions and attendance were evaluated. Minutes of the trust board and the local academy council were reviewed.

Having considered the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Safeguarding is effective.

The school is taking effective action to support and manage the behaviour of vulnerable pupils who have challenging behaviour.

Context

Outwood Academy Acklam is an average-sized secondary school. However, the number of pupils on roll has grown rapidly in the last few years. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is well above the national average. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and pupils who speak English as an additional language are above the national averages. There are high levels of mobility resulting mostly from pupils arriving from or returning to other countries or moving to schools in other parts of the United Kingdom.

There are 29 new members of staff who started in this academic year, including 16 new teachers. This is mainly due to the increase in the number of pupils on roll.

The principal was absent during the inspection. The trust has provided additional leadership to support the school.

Inspection findings

Leaders of the trust and the school have very high expectations that all pupils will achieve well in preparation for their future careers. Staff and pupils understand these expectations and – for the most part – pupils apply themselves to their learning to good effect. Leaders' ambition for pupils' academic success is supported by a strong ethos of care for pupils. The overall progress made by pupils – particularly disadvantaged pupils – by the end of Year 11 has been significantly above the national average for the last three years.

Leaders have a strong commitment to refining their work to improve pupils' behaviour. Leaders are self-critical and reflective, regularly reviewing the behaviour policy and making adjustments. As a result of leaders' actions, including training, there is clarity across the school that improving pupils' behaviour is the responsibility of all staff. A new behaviour policy – introduced in summer 2018 – provides pupils with more opportunities to make appropriate choices to regulate their behaviour before they reach internal isolation in the consequences room or a fixed-term exclusion.

Over time, exclusions have been too high, particularly for pupils with SEND. As a result of the new behaviour policy, exclusions have reduced considerably compared to the same point last year. The exclusion of pupils with SEND has reduced to less than a quarter of what it was. The number of pupils being repeatedly excluded has also reduced. However, there are still too many pupils who experience difficulty in moderating their behaviour and, as a consequence, are excluded for a fixed period.

You recognise that pupils need help and support to modify their behaviour, particularly vulnerable pupils. Learning managers review the behaviour, attendance and progress of vulnerable pupils each week. Supportive interventions are then put into place to help pupils to comply with the school's high expectations. Some learning managers visit lessons to check that support and intervention are making a positive difference to pupils' behaviour. Effective use is made of a range of external agencies to support pupils. Case studies show that some pupils who receive additional support do improve their attendance and behaviour, allowing them to concentrate on their learning.

Some pupils who need additional help with their emotional or behavioural needs attend 'the Bridge' or the personalised learning centre (PLC) for an agreed period of time. Teachers in the Bridge and the PLC interact positively with pupils, encouraging them to complete their individual work. Pupils are calm and engaged in their tasks. During their time in these areas, pupils develop the resilience they need to return to their normal timetable. Class teachers ensure that the work set for pupils matches that done by their classmates so that pupils do not fall behind.

Breaks and lunchtimes are calm and well ordered. Routines for sharing the inspirational message of the day are adhered to. Similarly, in the majority of lessons, behaviour is typically calm and, where it is not, the behaviour policy is followed. The vast majority of pupils understand this policy well and do what they are asked. Leaders know well the lessons where behaviour might be less positive and provide additional support to prevent issues arising. Pupils recognise that the strict behaviour routines allow learning to proceed with the minimum interruption. Many pupils spoken with knew this would help them achieve academic success.

The consequences room provides a closely monitored environment in which pupils work and learn outside of mainstream classes. The atmosphere in the room is typically calm and purposeful. Most pupils understand why they are spending time in the consequences room. They work in silence, reading or completing work provided by teachers. Staff provide support to help pupils complete their lesson, their half-day session or their full-day session in the consequences room. Typically, pupils' behaviour in this room meets the high expectations set by staff. Staff engage respectfully with pupils, and relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Behaviour seen in this room during lunchtime was less settled than during lesson time.

The needs of pupils looked after and pupils with SEND are well understood. At key stage 4, the progress of pupils with SEND was above that of others nationally in 2018. The attendance, behaviour and progress of pupils looked after are tracked by the coordinator with responsibility for this aspect of the school's work. Personal education plans are written in conjunction with carers, pupils and the local authority. Pupils set personal targets which are helpful in raising their achievement. Each pupil looked after has a careers interview to develop aspirations for their future. The virtual headteacher of the local authority confirmed other inspection

evidence which demonstrates that the school supports pupils looked after effectively.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The ambition for every pupil to be successful is rooted in care and compassion. All safeguarding policies and procedures comply with government expectations. Staff are thoroughly trained, including in the 'Prevent' duty and in issues such as female genital mutilation. Consequently, staff have a good understanding of safeguarding and put this into practice. Partnerships with external agencies – such as the police, children's services and youth offending teams – strengthen the work on safeguarding. Pupils – including those who are vulnerable – feel safe and happy at school. On the rare occasions when bullying occurs, it is dealt with appropriately. Pupils have a range of staff to whom they can go for help.

The 'Life' programme promotes pupils' understanding of how to keep safe. Topics include sex and relationships, drugs and alcohol, knife crime, domestic violence and sexual harassment. Pupils are clear about the risks associated with inappropriate use of social media and are strongly aware of their digital footprint. The trust has a focus on mental health awareness and staff have been trained to identify and support pupils with mental health concerns. It is too soon to see the impact of this work.

Leaders are working hard to improve attendance. Despite initiatives including telephone calls on the first day of absence and collecting pupils from home, attendance remains below the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Most pupils are aware that good attendance is important but too many of them are regularly absent. There are rewards for good attendance. However, not all pupils are aware of these rewards because the focus on attendance in vertical mentoring groups is inconsistent. Staff – including middle leaders – are not able to point to the impact of the work on attendance. Improving attendance does not have a high enough profile in the daily life of the school.

The local academy council – which is a committee of the trust board – shares the vision and high expectations of leaders. Members of the council have a variety of business and educational experience which enables them to provide valuable support and challenge to school leaders. Minutes of academy council meetings, however, show that the leaders are not consistently held to account for improving pupils' attendance.

External support

You have made effective use of the local authority's educational psychologist to support pupils in the school. An independent attendance officer has been employed, but it is too soon to see the impact of this work. Staff very much value the support trust directors and leaders provide to develop the quality of education. The impact of this work can be seen in positive outcomes achieved by pupils.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- reduce exclusions further so that they are in line with the national average
- improve attendance so that it is in line with the national average by:
 - working even more closely with families on the importance of good attendance
 - raising the profile of good attendance across the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of OGAT, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Middlesbrough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane
Senior Her Majesty's Inspector