

Outwood Academy Ripon

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	137412
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	386100
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2012
Lead inspector	James Kidd

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	486
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annette Beckwith
Headteacher	Barry Found
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2008
School address	Clotherholme Road Ripon HG4 2DE
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Introduction

Inspection team

James Kidd
Steven Goldsmith
Janet Pruchniewicz

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 26 lessons or part-lessons taught by 25 teachers. Meetings were held with: three groups of students, including sixth-formers; parents and carers; two members of the Academy Council; pastoral and academic staff; and senior leaders. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the academy's work, and looked at improvement planning, internal and external student progress data, students' workbooks and documentation in relation to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors also scrutinised 27 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller than average-sized secondary school, which holds specialist status in technology. It has a small sixth form which is growing in size. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of students from minority ethnic heritages is low. The proportion of disabled students or those with special educational needs is in line with that usually seen. As a result of many students coming from service families, there is an above-average percentage who join or leave the school at other than the usual times.

The school became an academy, and an integral part of the Outwood Grange Academy family of schools, in September 2011. It is a nationally recognised Healthy School and a member of the Outwood Grange Teaching School Alliance. The academy meets the government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for learning and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good academy with a good sixth form. The majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires are entirely happy with what the academy is doing for their sons and daughters and are accurate in their view that it keeps them safe and is raising their self-esteem. It is not an outstanding academy because, although improving markedly, teaching and students’ achievement are good rather than outstanding.
- Students enter the academy with below-average attainment. All groups of students make good progress and achieve well in both English and mathematics to reach broadly average standards by Year 11. There is early examination entry in mathematics and the current GCSE results in this subject are above average. Achievement in the sixth form is good in academic and vocational subjects.
- As a result of an overriding emphasis on the leadership of teaching and management of teachers’ performance, the quality of teaching is improving apace and is good, with examples of outstanding practice. The academy is always striving to improve teaching and learning further and to increase the percentage of outstanding lessons.
- Students behave well and are generally fully engaged during lessons. They feel safe in the academy and comment that the adults who work with them are approachable and always available if they need help. They have a perceptive awareness of the many different forms bullying can take, including that which is based on prejudice, but say that bullying is rare within the academy.
- Leadership and management are good. The strong and perceptive leadership of the principal and senior team is complemented by the support of senior staff employed by the Outwood Grange Academy family of schools. Curriculum leaders manage their subjects well but the academy is currently placing more focus on developing their leadership roles further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and students' learning further by:
 - reducing the amount of teacher-talk and direction during lessons
 - giving students more opportunities to find things out for themselves and thus take greater responsibility for their own learning
 - enhancing current strategies to ensure that activities in lessons meet the learning needs of all students even more closely.
- Further develop the leadership roles of curriculum leaders by:
 - giving them more responsibility for the evaluation of teachers' performance and for the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning in their subject areas
 - extending opportunities for coaching and for focused professional development.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students enjoy learning and generally look forward to their lessons. When given the opportunity, they work well in pairs and in groups and enjoy helping each other. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, for example, students were delighted to support their peers with algebraic equations; those receiving the support were grateful for the help which their classmates were more than willing to give them. Students engage well with their learning overall and are keen to improve their work. Students in the sixth form also approach their learning with enjoyment and maturity. Parents and carers express positive views about how well their children are doing and are accurate in their view that they make good progress and achieve well in all stages of the academy.

Students' attainment on entry to the academy is below average. As a result of good teaching and sensitive support, they make good progress and reach broadly average standards by the end of Key Stage 4. Recent results in mathematics were above average, are the best in the school's history and there were more A and A* grades than ever before. Students say that their pleasing results in mathematics are partly as a consequence of teachers requiring them to solve problems linked to real-life situations and to their own experiences. Students also achieve particularly well in graphics, which is a key element of the academy's technology specialism. In this subject, students display impressive computer skills and produce thought-provoking work which is pleasing to the eye. Students enter the sixth form with GCSE grades which are generally below those expected in most sixth forms. They achieve well in academic and vocational subjects and attainment is rising.

Well-focused support from teaching assistants, often in small-group sessions, ensures that disabled students and those with special educational needs learn well and make the same good progress as their peers. Moreover, and as a result of the sensitive care and support they receive, students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable achieve well too.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers are correct in their view that the quality of teaching their children receive is good. Indeed, teaching across the academy and in the sixth form continues to improve as a result of the work of the teaching and learning group, ably supported by the members of the 'deep learning' team. This team has produced tips and advice on how teachers can extend and reinforce students' learning in the classroom. Teachers also value the weekly training sessions with the focus on teaching and learning. They are grateful for the detailed feedback they receive on their performance in the classroom.

In the best lessons, there are outstanding relationships, a rapid pace to learning and a range of different methods to motivate students. Learning is fun and active, the individual needs of students are met well and students see the value of the activities. In an outstanding French lesson, use of singing to emphasise key phrases added enormously to the fun and students' engagement. In lessons such as these, teachers have an accurate view of the progress individual students are making and are not afraid to modify activities to maximise achievement. In most lessons, students have opportunities to learn together in pairs and in groups and their progress is enhanced when they are expected to research for themselves. In a minority of lessons, however, there is too much teacher talk and direction and students are not required to take responsibility for their own learning and progress. These lessons often have a 'one-size fits all' approach and activities do not always meet students' aspirations and individual learning needs as closely as they should.

Teaching has a good impact on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The planned curriculum encourages students to link learning across subjects, for example when their work on self-esteem in personal education leads them to complete projects on the same topic in graphics.

Assessment is good and is complemented by regular and comprehensive monitoring of students' progress through the impressive 'Praising Stars' initiative; a programme which tracks the performance of individuals and informs intervention activities, classroom organisation and even seating plans. Students' assignments are marked well and they receive accurate advice on how they can improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The vast majority of parents and carers believe the academy supports their children well and that it keeps them safe. One parent spoke for many with the words, 'My son is nurtured and cared for as an individual.' Others added, 'The principal and staff are friendly and approachable and our children, who used to lack confidence, are now flourishing.' Students are of the same view and say they are safe and that the staff are always there for them if they have any concerns. They also believe that they are supported well by their peers and by older students. They pay particular tribute to the Year 8 'buddies' who, in their words, 'Look after the new students in Year 7 when they first arrive'. Students have a good awareness of what makes an unsafe situation and of how they can keep themselves and their classmates secure. They are certain that the academy does all it can to promote their emotional safety and to raise their confidence and self-esteem. They point to the personal education programme as a major vehicle for this, saying it has a positive impact on their understanding of the dangers of bullying by giving them detailed information on the many forms bullying can take. Students say that bullying has reduced significantly over time, that it is now rare and is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff. They are also of the view that

their safety is also promoted by sixth formers who are key 'champions' for younger students. Attendance has improved and is now average.

The committed team of teaching assistants is sensitive to the needs of all students who sometimes find the work difficult and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. The 'Hub' provides very effective support, ensuring that students who attend it can access everything the academy has to offer.

Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school site is good. They get on well with students in their own and other years as a result of the positive impact of the vertical tutor-group system. They demonstrate a well-developed social conscience and support a variety of charities, 'Sport Relief' and 'Help for Heroes', to name but two.

Leadership and management

The dedicated leadership provided by the principal is supported well with committed leadership and management by the senior team. Leadership and management are enhanced by an experienced executive principal and directors of curriculum areas employed by the Outwood Grange Academy family of schools. The Chair and members of the Academy Council are well informed about the strengths and areas for development of the academy, support it strongly and challenge its leadership with rigour. Staff at all levels share a clear vision for academy development and there is a strong emphasis on ongoing improvement in all areas of its life. Self-evaluation of academy performance is accurate and leaders reject any complacency. Leaders are proud of the commitment of pastoral, academic and administrative staff. They recognise, however, that the leadership skills of curriculum leaders are somewhat underdeveloped. For example, they are aware that more opportunities for them to take increasing responsibility for evaluating performance and promoting improvements in teaching in their areas are essential if the academy is to improve further. Relevant professional development for staff is a key feature of academy life but leaders wish to extend this and give curriculum leaders more opportunities for coaching their staff. Nonetheless, good teaching, good achievement, improved attendance and strong support from the family of schools demonstrate that the academy has good capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and flexible to students' needs and interests. Sixth-formers, for example, value the variety of academic and vocational courses on offer in such a small setting. The curriculum has a good impact on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, demonstrated in the outstanding assembly on students' support for others less fortunate than themselves. Students were proud of the recognition of their work for charity but were also moved by the haunting images accompanied by the song 'From a Distance'.

The academy is an inclusive community, tackles discrimination in all its forms, and takes care to promote equality of opportunity for all. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are fully up to date and meet current government requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Outwood Academy Ripon, Ripon HG4 2DE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited the academy recently. We enjoyed watching you learn and we are particularly grateful to those of you who gave up your time to talk to us. We enjoyed listening to your views, which were most valuable in helping us to come to our judgements. We would also like to congratulate you on your work for a variety of charities and particularly for your fund-raising activities for Sport Relief. Here is what we think about the academy.

This is a good academy which has a good sixth form. You receive good teaching and, because you work hard and engage well in your learning too, you make good progress in your studies and reach broadly average standards at the end of your courses. Those of you in Year 11 are rightly proud of your GCSE results in mathematics and many of you are working hard to get even higher grades. You behave well, look after each other and say that bullying is rare in the academy and that if it occurs it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants look after you well and you feel safe in the academy.

Senior leaders are always looking for ways to make the academy better. We would like to help in this. We asked them, therefore, to give you more opportunities to research work for yourselves, to give you more responsibility for your own learning and progress and to make sure that activities in lessons are always relevant to your particular needs. We would also like the staff who lead subjects to receive more professional training and take more responsibility for evaluating how well their subjects are doing and for improving teaching and learning in their areas.

Thank you again for your kindness and courtesy to us and for your contribution to the inspection.

Yours sincerely

James Kidd
Lead inspector

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