

# The Ockendon Academy

Erriff Drive, South Ockendon, Essex RM15 5AY

**Inspection dates** 25–26 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The Principal, Vice Principals and other leaders are uncompromising, and have been highly successful, in their drive to improve teaching and achievement.
- Teaching is usually good, sometimes outstanding, and improving strongly because of the challenge and support provided by leaders.
- Leaders and teachers have worked relentlessly and effectively to develop students' literacy skills.
- Students of all ages are enquiring, resilient and determined to make progress towards their targets in all subjects.
- The personal conduct shown by students is impeccable. They support each other and work effectively with their teachers. Students are safe and exceptionally well cared for.
- The sixth form is good. Students study a wide range of A level courses that help to equip them for the workplace or university.
- Governors are very effective in holding the academy to account for the quality of teaching and for students' attainment and progress.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement is good rather than outstanding because of a decline in standards in 2012. This has been very effectively reversed, but achievement has not returned to the previous outstanding level it was at in 2011.
- Not enough of the teaching is outstanding. Some teachers do not always check students have completed or understood a task before asking them to start the next.
- Teachers do not set sufficiently demanding targets for some students in the sixth form.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 34 lessons, including some jointly observed with the academy’s senior leaders. Inspectors also made short visits to tutor periods.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, teachers, members of the governing body, and with a representative of the local authority.
- Students’ views were sought during lessons and break times. Inspectors also met with groups of students and scrutinised their work across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors analysed the academy’s own parent surveys, 26 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 102 staff questionnaire returns.
- The inspection team observed the academy’s work and looked at a number of documents including the academy’s data on current attainment and progress, policies, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also examined documents used by the academy’s leaders, including governors, to check standards and evaluate aspects of the academy’s performance.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school’s view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

## Inspection team

Jason Howard, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
John Daniell	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Heather Housden	Additional Inspector
Simon Hughes	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Ockendon Academy converted to become an academy on 1 January 2011. When its predecessor school, The Ockendon School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- This is an average-sized secondary school that has grown rapidly over recent years. In September 2013, students were admitted to the sixth form for the first time, joining the on-site Ockendon Studio School, which is part of the academy.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium (extra government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority or from service families) is above average.
- The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- None of the students are educated in off-site alternative provision.

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

- Improve teaching and achievement so that they are outstanding by ensuring all teachers:
  - use the information they have about students' existing knowledge, understanding and skills to plan activities that promote their progress
  - check that students' understanding is secure before moving on to the next task or topic
  - provide students with precise guidance on what they need to do to improve their work, and check that they respond to it
  - set sixth form students targets that are sufficiently demanding.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good progress overall from their below-average starting points. Leaders responded swiftly and effectively to a fall in the percentage of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics in 2012, caused by slow progress in English. GCSE results improved in 2013. Standards are continuing to rise sharply because students are making rapid progress. The academy's assessment information and students' work indicate that standards in English and mathematics are at least at the expected level this year.
- The academy's assessment data indicate that students in Year 11 are now making rapid progress in English as a result of more effective teaching. Inspectors saw evidence of this improvement in students' work.
- Students make a good start in Key Stage 3, and are making accelerated progress in Key Stage 4, because all subject areas maintain a constant focus upon key skills including reading, writing and speaking. Leaders have used additional Year 7 'catch-up' funding effectively to improve the reading ages of the large number of students, often boys, who start Year 7 with below-average literacy skills.
- In 2013, students supported by the pupil premium made less progress than their peers and finished one grade behind them in English and three-quarters of a grade behind in mathematics. Actions taken by the academy's leaders have narrowed these gaps considerably for current students; Year 11 students supported by the pupil premium are now making as much progress as their peers. In English, for example, this progress has resulted in the gap currently being negligible.
- The progress of more-able students' was in line with that expected nationally in most subjects in 2013, with the exception of English. Progress for most in mathematics was at least in line with expectations. Leaders have set more demanding targets for more-able students and monitoring data indicates they are now making good or better progress in all subjects.
- The academy does not make use of early GCSE entry. Teachers set mock examinations instead, and students appreciate the detailed feedback they receive about their performance in different types of questions.
- Leaders and teachers monitor the progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs exceptionally closely. They use this information, and their clear understanding of how best to support each individual, to help all take a full part in lessons. These students make at least as much progress as their peers in almost all subjects and achieve well.
- The academy introduced sixth form provision in September 2013. The school's progress data indicates that the progress being made by the small number of students in Year 12 is in line with that expected.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually good and sometimes outstanding. As a result, most students in all year groups make good progress. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel that their children are taught well and students agree.

- Students complete activities that are interesting and varied; teachers remind them of their individual targets and how to meet them. Teachers encourage students to keep a record of the progress they have made; this encourages them to persist if they initially find the work difficult. Teaching assistants are used well to support students who need additional help with their work.
- Teachers plan activities so that each builds upon previous learning. This often helps to reinforce skills students are working on in other subjects. During a history lesson observed, for example, students used persuasive writing skills they had learned in English to make the case for, or against, the bombing of civilian areas in Germany during the Second World War.
- Most teachers are very skilled at asking questions to check students' understanding and to encourage students to develop their ideas fully. In many lessons these strategies help the more-able to construct more complex responses. For example, in a geography lesson, students improved the accuracy of their writing about fair trade in this way. They were able to explain to the teacher how this would help them gain a higher grade.
- Teachers often ask students to read aloud during lessons. They do so with confidence and without hesitation, and are ready to discuss the text. Teachers successfully encourage students to read widely; over three thousand book loans have been made since the start of the academic year. In most subjects, teachers show students how to structure pieces of extended writing when answering questions in detail, and give them regular opportunities to practise doing so. As a result, students are able to write for different purposes, and at length.
- Many good examples of regular marking across the academy show students how to improve their work further. Many students pay careful attention to this feedback and quickly improve their work. Some teachers do not make it clear to students what they need to do to improve their work. A small minority of teachers do not mark work sufficiently regularly, so students continue to make the same mistakes.
- In a very small proportion of weaker teaching, students make less progress. This is either because they have not been prepared well enough for the tasks given to them or because the teacher has planned new activities without using information about the progress the students have made already. Sometimes this means students find tasks too easy, or too difficult. In an English lesson observed during the inspection, for example, less-able students could not work out how to improve their answers using the material on the board because the language used was too complicated.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers have high expectations and questioning, demonstration, discussion and debate are all used effectively. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and help create a purposeful learning environment. Analysis of students' work indicates that some are working towards targets that are not ambitious enough, given their ability.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. The subtle but effective management of students' behaviour over a period of time has helped students to become mature, thoughtful and considerate individuals, who are well prepared to navigate adult life and work.
- Students of all ages are keen to acquire new knowledge and to develop their skills in each lesson, and in every subject. They maintain an intense focus on their learning, want to make progress towards their targets, and know how to do this. Students contribute well in lessons and support each other. In a religious studies lesson seen during the inspection, all students listened

carefully to different explanations of the Trinity and offered each other accurate suggestions about how to improve them further and move to the next level.

- Students are highly motivated by the rewards they receive for behaving well and the recognition they receive in special 'celebration assemblies'. Teachers rarely need to use sanctions; leaders check their detailed records of these regularly and tackle any emerging issues very swiftly and effectively. Disruption to learning of any kind is exceptionally rare. Those who find it difficult to manage their behaviour receive effective support and the academy does not exclude students.
- The conduct of students around the academy's site is almost always impeccable. Leaders encourage them to take a pride in their appearance, to welcome visitors, and to treat the site and all who work within it with respect. Students respond exceptionally well. Attendance rates are slightly above the national average and rising.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Parents, staff and students are unreservedly positive about standards of behaviour and believe students are kept safe. Teachers and other adults help students understand how to stay safe in a variety of contexts, including when using the internet.
- Students learn the importance of respecting others. During one lesson, students gave thoughtful explanations of what 'respect' might involve in the workplace or in family relationships. All forms of bullying, including homophobic or racially-motivated abuse, are virtually unknown and students confirm the academy's leaders respond robustly to the few instances that do occur.

### **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- Leaders at all levels have gained expertise, advice and guidance from the outstanding leadership of the Principal so that overall they have developed into a highly effective team. The Principal and other senior leaders, including leaders of the sixth form, believe that every student can, should and will achieve highly, both in their personal development and in examination outcomes. This sense of ambition is constantly communicated to the students, who believe it too, and who strive for success.
- Students are proud to be members of a community in which they are treated as they treat others – with respect, and courtesy. All who responded to the staff questionnaire indicated their pride in being a member of the academy and their belief that it is well led and managed.
- Leaders base their actions, such as the academy's comprehensive literacy strategy, on a clear understanding of the academy's context, the needs and abilities of the students, and, often, careful research. They involve staff in planning for improvement, and help them try new strategies and techniques. Rigorous performance management arrangements and constant checking of standards also help ensure that teaching improves and that new policies are adopted quickly. Adults who support the learning of disabled students and those who have special educational needs are particularly effective because of the specialised training they receive.
- Constant and searching evaluation of all aspects of the academy's provision helps leaders to identify weaknesses quickly and respond appropriately. Rapid change has enabled students to make better progress in English and secured better outcomes for those supported by the pupil premium. A new system has been put in place to make it easier for teachers to monitor their students' progress and for leaders to identify those falling behind so they can be given even more rapid support than at present.

- The range of courses provided is broad and balanced. Leaders work with local primary schools so that students can make rapid progress as soon as they join in Year 7. The recently-established Studio School, established on site through the initiative of the Principal, allows older students to combine study with work experience.
- Students can also opt to study A level courses and demand for places is high. Leaders' considerable investment in careers information, education, advice and guidance means that students make well-informed choices about which post-16 courses will best meet their abilities and interests. The quality of the facilities provided for the students is outstanding. Almost all students who completed Year 11 in 2013 are in employment or engaged in education or training.
- Enrichment activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's and Sports Leadership Awards complement the broad range of other opportunities available to students in sport, music, drama and leadership within school, which help to make the school's social, moral, spiritual and cultural provision outstanding.
- The local authority supported the academy in its successful Studio School bid. It has helped the academy build links with other successful schools in order to strengthen teaching in the science subjects. The local authority's safeguarding team works with the academy effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body uses its clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses to set appropriate priorities and plans. It has supported leaders' efforts to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills, including through the appointment of directors of English and mathematics.
  - Members of the governing body participate in training, including in the interpretation of data about students' performance. This helps them to evaluate standards and identify issues of concern when they receive monitoring information from senior leaders. Governors were able to identify weaknesses in English before the fall in results in 2012 took place and supported senior leaders' efforts to tackle them.
  - Governors use a number of different measures of teachers' performance, including the amount of progress made by students, when determining which staff receive pay increases.
  - Statutory responsibilities concerning safeguarding are met.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136387
<b>Local authority</b>	Thurrock
<b>Inspection number</b>	440660

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1010
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	37
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Duckworth
<b>Principal</b>	Barbara King
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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