

# Oakfield Academy

Oakfield Road, Frome, Somerset, BA11 4JF

**Inspection dates** 24–25 April 2014

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected    |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement is not yet consistently good. Achievement is variable within and between classes in all years.
- Pupils are not making enough progress in English, especially in Years 5 and 6.
- There is too much teaching which is the same for all pupils regardless of their different abilities.
- In many subjects, teachers are not doing enough to improve pupils' key skills, especially in writing in detail and for different audiences.
- The quality of marking and assessment varies far too much. Teachers rarely give pupils clear written feedback in their exercise books indicating what they have done well, what improvements they can make and how.
- School leaders, including governors, have not ensured that improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress have been consistent and sustained.
- The role played by teachers who have specific subject responsibilities is not well developed. Consequently, some of them make a limited contribution to improving standards in their subject areas.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has been in post for four months. She has set ambitious goals for the school and the changes she has made are already evident and generating improvements.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at least good. This is supported by a strong programme to promote pupils' personal development.
- Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is consistently good and occasionally outstanding. Pupils are cheerful, polite and keen to help one another, their staff and visitors. They want to do well in their education.
- An extensive range of extra-curricular activities offers pupils many enjoyable experiences especially in music, drama and sport.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons taught by 25 different teachers.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of Governors and other members of the governing body, with four different groups of pupils and with many staff including the headteacher, senior managers and heads of departments.
- A written report supplied by the local authority was also taken into account.
- Inspectors took account of 20 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The responses to 40 staff questionnaires were also considered.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' past and present work and scrutinised various documents. These included the academy's checks on how well it is doing, its planning, extensive information on pupils' academic progress, and records relating to behaviour, attendance, punctuality, and safeguarding.
- Inspectors evaluated the impact of additional funding, such as the pupil premium and primary school sport funding.

## Inspection team

Bill Stoneham, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila Crew

Additional Inspector

Charlotte Evers

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Oakfield Academy is a larger-than-average middle school. It converted to academy status in September 2011. When its predecessor school, Oakfield School, was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2011, it was judged to be good.
- The headteacher took up post in January 2014.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion who speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children) is just above average.
- Just under 30 pupils are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding which is for pupils who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Pupils' additional needs mainly relate to behaviour, emotional and social, and moderate learning difficulties.
- The academy meets the current government floor standard for Year 6, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The academy does not use any off-site alternative education providers.
- No pupils are entered early for GCSE examinations.

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good over time, with a higher proportion which is outstanding by:
  - making sure that teachers cater for the more able and lower attaining pupils rather than giving all pupils the same work
  - making sure that all marking makes it clear to pupils what they have done well and how they can improve their work.
- Raise levels of achievement in all years and in all subjects, especially in English, by:
  - ensuring that, based on their starting points, more pupils make at least the progress they should
  - teachers giving pupils more exercises where they write at length.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
  - ensuring robust plans are established to monitor the quality of teaching and learning
  - developing the skills of all members of the headteacher's senior leadership team and governors so that they can check accurately whether the actions they are taking to raise achievement and improve teaching are actually working.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils make good progress in all subjects.
- Pupils' progress is variable between subjects throughout the school. School records show that, by the end of Year 8, too few pupils have made the progress they should have made in English, based on their starting points in Year 5. Improvements in mathematics, humanities and physical education have not been matched in English.
- More able pupils do not achieve consistently well. They are not yet making good progress in all subjects because they are not always given work that is hard enough for them.
- In 2013, pupils in Year 6 supported through additional funding made less progress than other pupils. The gap in the standards they achieved was equivalent to about three terms in English. It was about two terms in mathematics.
- Evidence based on teachers' assessments indicates that these gaps are now closing. This is because of improved tracking of pupils' progress, better use of additional funding, including the Year 7 catch-up fund, and an increased focus on developing pupils' reading and writing. In Years 7 and 8, the gap in English is now the equivalent of about two terms. The gap in mathematics remains unchanged.
- The more able pupils read well, but others need to practise reading more. Pupils' writing is not fluent and accurate enough as pupils do not regularly write at length. Pupils have sound numeracy skills but do not apply them in other subjects often enough.
- Progress in both reading and writing in Years 5 and 6 is also beginning to increase because of more effective intervention when pupils are not doing well enough. These changes, however, are new and will take time to become fully embedded and even more effective.
- Overall, pupils achieve better in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6. However, the majority of pupils who attend the school for all four years do not typically make good progress because they are making up for some lost ground in Years 5 and 6.
- Disabled pupils and all groups with special educational needs make at least the same progress as other pupils, with some minor variability over time in different subjects and year groups.
- Since the arrival of the current headteacher, whole-school tracking arrangements have been sharpened. This means that senior staff can now follow the performance of each pupil, in all subjects, with greater accuracy. Pupils are aware of how well they are doing and their target grades. This information, however, is not yet being used routinely and accurately to challenge pupils' underperformance and ensure even greater levels of progress.
- The school receives some additional funding through the primary school sport funding programme. The planning for how these funds are spent is good; the money has helped pupils to become even more involved in sport, with free swimming lessons and more opportunities to play cricket for example. The funds have been helpful in boosting pupils' confidence and promoting their teamwork, responsibility and healthy lifestyles further.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not of a consistently good standard. The quality of teaching varies considerably between subjects and years; teaching is rarely outstanding. The quality of learning and the quality of feedback pupils receive, especially in written feedback, depends far too much on the individual teacher.
- Over time, teaching is not of a sufficiently high quality to ensure that all groups of pupils make at least good progress. Planning for learning is not sharp. Far too frequently, teachers plan for the middle ability pupils. This limits the progress made by both less and more able pupils. In some lessons, lower attainers make hesitant progress because the work is too difficult for them

and more able pupils work accurately and finish quickly, but have nothing else to do. Staff expectations about what pupils can achieve are frequently set too low; this particularly hampers the progress of more able pupils.

- In some cases, the extensive use of worksheets restricts scope for pupils to write at length. Pupils, who are keen to learn and develop their knowledge and understanding, are hampered when they only have to respond with one word answers or short and simple sentences.
- Where teaching has the most impact on learning, the work pupils are given encourages them to write longer answers. Or, as in mathematics, pupils are challenged and encouraged to plan how they will tackle problems. This was seen in a successful Year 5 lesson when pupils had to use their knowledge of triangles to explore different types of angles they had not met before.
- In a most effective Year 7 physical education lesson, pupils worked in small groups designing their own circuit training routines. They related their work to specific sports and applied what they already knew to the activity. All made rapid progress because they had to analyse and make decisions for themselves. The challenging nature of the activity promoted excellent teamwork and ensured the successful application of prior knowledge and understanding. Enjoyment was evident and progress was rapid. Such progress in learning is not evident often enough.
- Many books are marked regularly in the sense that pupils' work is acknowledged by a series of ticks and the occasional comment such as 'good effort'. It is rare for pupils to receive more detailed and more constructive written feedback where teachers highlight what has been done well, what needs to be improved and how improvements can be made.
- Teaching assistants are a valuable resource and in most cases are deployed well and effectively. Where teaching assistants are used well, they make a good contribution to learning. This was illustrated well in a Year 6 mathematics class for a lower attaining group where most pupils had special educational needs. The teaching assistant had been fully involved in the planning for learning and her contribution helped to ensure good learning took place.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It is rare for learning to be compromised because of inappropriate behaviour.
- Pupils are happy and enjoy school life. They feel safe, valued and respected. Pupils believe that the school is getting better and that it has improved in many ways since the new headteacher arrived. As one pupil commented, 'It is good here and we now even receive birthday cards from the headteacher.'
- Pupils behave consistently well in lessons and around the school site. There is no litter and classrooms, corridors and the extensive outdoor areas are maintained to a high standard.
- Pupils are keen to learn and invariably arrive at their classes in a positive frame of mind. Far too frequently the work they are given and the teaching they receive do not fully match their needs and enthusiasm; nevertheless, they remain loyal and maintain their concentration well.
- Most pupils try hard and are keen to succeed. They take pride in their endeavours. This is reflected in the quality of their exercise books which are invariably well presented, neat and tidy and very rarely adorned with any graffiti.
- Relationships in school are cordial and pupils cooperate well with one another, staff and visitors.
- Rates of exclusion are very low. The school has much success in dealing with pupils with known behavioural difficulties.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils report that bullying incidents are very rare; a claim supported by the school's records. Pupils told inspectors that they have considerable confidence in the staff to deal with any untoward incidents.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep safe, both in school and beyond, including with regard to cyber bullying and internet safety. Pupils believe that the school is a safe community in

which all pupils are valued.

- Attendance was below the national average for secondary schools nationally during the last academic year. It has improved a lot and is now above average. Procedures for monitoring and following up absence are effective.
- The school gives pupils good opportunities to take on responsibility and charity work is an important aspect of school life. Discrimination is not tolerated and the significant successes of the girls' rugby team illustrate how well equality of opportunity is promoted.

## The leadership and management

## requires improvement

- This is a school that is in transition. Leadership and management require improvement because there are inconsistencies in key areas of performance, especially in the progress pupils make, the consistency with which they are taught and the way teaching and learning are led and managed.
- Some members of the headteacher's senior leadership team lack clarity about the skills they need for their roles and responsibilities. Similarly, the expectations of the part middle leaders play in school improvement have not always been identified well. The role played by some teachers who are in charge of subjects is not being carried out effectively. As a result, some of them make only a limited contribution to improving standards in their areas of responsibility.
- Many of the changes that the headteacher has made are still new and will require more time to have a fundamental impact on outcomes to ensure the school's overall effectiveness is at least good. Under the headteacher's skilful leadership, the school now has the capacity to make significant and sustainable improvements.
- Improvements have been made to the way teaching and learning are led and managed. For example, there is now a planned programme for classroom observations and the training provided for teachers is being improved and related to specific areas which are not strong enough.
- The key weaknesses are being tackled and the recently appointed headteacher had already instilled a desire amongst the staff to secure significant improvements. Evidence of improvement is already emerging, for example the performance gap between pupils eligible for additional funding and those who are not is closing and the use of additional funding to promote reading and writing is having a noticeable effect.
- The energetic headteacher shows considerable fortitude and determination. She knows exactly what needs to be improved and the measures she has already taken are delivering encouraging results.
- The school is benefiting from the headteacher's decisive leadership. Despite the number of changes she has made, there is a corporate determination to move the school forward speedily. Every member of staff who replied to the inspection questionnaire was supportive. As one commented, 'The school has started a new era. Since this January we have already put new procedures and plans in place to improve further and continue our current successes.' The high morale of staff underpins the determination to succeed.
- All requirements for safeguarding pupils and safer recruitment are met. Pupils have good, and occasionally outstanding, opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A particularly moving assembly was seen in which a boy confidently played his guitar and the headteacher delivered a strong moral message on perseverance.
- Self-evaluation is improving. Governors have improved their ability to monitor the school's work. The school maintains a good working relationship with the local authority and this too is ensuring better self-evaluation and more effective governance.
- The curriculum offers a broad range of opportunities and experiences for pupils. Developing pupils' skills through all subjects, especially in terms of literacy, are relatively weak, but improving. A useful initiative to develop pupils' literacy is in its early stages. While some impact is evident, more time is needed to secure sustainable improvements.
- Additional funding is now being targeted effectively, with extra support being offered to help a

selection of pupils to boost their literacy. Achievement is improving, although the school's records of the improvements being made need to be more accurate.

- Partnership work with other Frome schools is good, which helps to ensure that transition arrangements at the beginning of Year 5 and at the end of Year 8 are efficient.
- Comparatively few parents responded to the inspection questionnaire. Those who did so are mainly supportive and believe that the school is well led and managed.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are very proud of the academy and its work and are now increasingly challenging. They have always been supportive, but by their own admission they have accepted what was presented to them without properly or thoroughly questioning the outcomes. Their approach has now changed. They remain highly supportive and work collaboratively with the new headteacher and with guidance from the local authority. As a result, governors are now holding the academy more effectively to account. Training for governors to increase their effectiveness further has been planned for.
- Governors are aware of the weaknesses that exist. They fully accept that current levels of achievement require improvement and that the leadership of teaching and learning needs to be sharper and more focused. Their undoubted support is now being matched by a desire to question, challenge and hold staff to account for the outcomes.
- Governors fulfil their statutory requirements well, including safeguarding and staff recruitment. They are also aware of the need to ensure that teachers' pay is linked to how well teachers perform in the classroom and how well pupils achieve.

## 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> | 136970   |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Somerset |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 443852   |

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

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Middle deemed secondary         |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Academy Converter               |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 9–13                            |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                           |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 535                             |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body              |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Tim Cutting                     |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Emma Wilkes                     |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | Not previously inspected        |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01373 462539                    |
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