

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Tony Cunningham
Executive Headteacher
Oxclose Community Academy
Dilston Close
Oxclose Village
Washington
Tyne and Wear
NE38 0LN

Dear Mr Cunningham

Short inspection of Oxclose Community Academy

Following my visit to the school on 23 February 2016 with Wendy Ripley, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your predecessor school was judged to be good in December 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

This is a school that values individuals. Its ethos to 'Value Diversity and Strive for Excellence' recognises that everyone is different but equal. Pupils feel safe and valued for who they are. This emphasis on caring is valued by both pupils and parents and contributes to pupils' high achievement. Pupils at the school are eager to learn and want to do well. They are polite and friendly and their behaviour is good both in and out of lessons. The atmosphere in the school during lessons is calm and ordered. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and based on mutual respect.

You have successfully addressed each of the areas for improvement identified during the inspection in December 2010. The highly effective support and challenge offered to middle leaders has led to an area previously identified as a weakness now being a significant strength of the leadership of the school. Supported by senior leaders, middle leaders are increasingly playing a key role in supporting, monitoring and assessing the impact of teaching in their areas.

Leaders' evaluation of the school's performance correctly identifies a number of further areas for development. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium has remained stubbornly low for the last three years. Current information from the school's tracking system indicates that an extensive range of targeted interventions throughout the school is having a significant impact on the progress of these pupils and that this gap will decrease significantly this year. Your accurate identification of these areas together with a relentless focus on improving outcomes for all pupils continues to deliver further school improvements.

The governing body fully supports your work, knows the school well and is ambitious for the school. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that could be improved even further. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school and the way it is led. They are confident that their children are happy, safe and well taught.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders are committed to safeguarding the young people in their care and have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and effective. Records are detailed and of high quality and arrangements to keep pupils safe are robust and effective. There are strict processes in place to ensure that the suitability of staff is checked thoroughly before an appointment to the school is made. Staff have received a range of training on potential areas of risk for young people.

There is a calm and purposeful working environment throughout the school which has a positive impact both on pupils' conduct and their understanding and tolerance of others. Pupils confirm the good quality of care and support they receive, and are confident that they can trust staff to deal with any concerns they may have.

Inspection findings

- The executive headteacher and head of school work well together as an effective team, with a drive and passion which enthuses governors and staff throughout the school. Senior and middle leaders have an excellent working relationship with the governing body, and there is a clear mutual respect for the contribution which each makes to the work of the school. Governors are experienced and know the school well.
- The school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate and is based on a thorough analysis of data and other relevant information. Leaders and governors are quick to recognise and tackle any areas of weakness in the school and have developed accurate and efficient systems for checking on pupils' progress in order to identify as soon as possible individuals or groups of pupils who need extra help. The introduction of a phonics-based literacy programme and extensive work to improve confidence in numeracy is having a significant impact on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

- The majority of pupils benefit from high-quality teaching and support which enables them to make good progress. Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics and across a range of other subjects. Progress in science has not been as strong, and this department is now closely monitored by senior leaders and has received external support from a local school. Leaders are aware of the variation in achievement between some subjects at Key Stage 4 and have a clear action plan to bring this about. They are also aware that, in some lessons, the most-able pupils are not being challenged to achieve their best and that there is a need to increase the proportion of pupils who achieve A* and A grades at GCSE at the end of Year 11.
- The quality of middle leadership and of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection as a result of extensive professional development focused carefully on the individual needs of each member of staff. The work of middle leaders is now a strength of the school. Subject leaders have high aspirations for all pupils. They assess pupils' prior attainment when they join the school, set challenging targets and regularly and accurately track pupil progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning and to the support they receive from teachers are very positive. Lessons are rarely disrupted and movement throughout the school is calm and orderly. There are many high-quality displays in classrooms and in open spaces around the site. School records, confirmed by discussions with pupils, show that incidents of bullying are rare and that pupils have confidence in the school staff to deal with any issues that do arise. Levels of attendance for pupils continue to improve and are above the national average for secondary schools. The number of fixed-term exclusions continues to decline and the school has not permanently excluded a pupil for many years.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the remaining variation in achievement across subjects at GCSE is reduced
- a greater proportion of the most-able pupils achieve the highest grades at GCSE.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Sunderland City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we held meetings with the executive headteacher and head of school, senior and middle leaders, the Chair and three other members of the governing body and the Academy Improvement Partner. We visited classrooms, in some cases with a senior leader, to observe teaching and learning, to talk with pupils and to consider the progress made by pupils in their books. We observed behaviour in and around the school and examined incident logs and records of attendance. We looked closely at the school's website, published policies and school self-evaluation, and checked safeguarding records. We considered 99 responses to the online pupil questionnaire, 89 responses to the online staff questionnaire and 91 responses to the online pupil questionnaire (Parent View).