

Octagon AP Academy

Commerce Road, Wood Green, London N22 8DZ

Inspection dates

28 February–1 March 2017

| Overall effectiveness | Good |
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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Outstanding |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Exceptional leadership has transformed the school. In just under three years, it has moved from its predecessor's judgement of inadequate to being good overall.
- The leadership team and the TBAP Multi-Academy Trust are rigorous in their drive to raise standards in all areas. They know very clearly what they need to do to raise the school to the next level.
- Pupils benefit from their time at Octagon because of the high quality of care and support, which underpins the academic work and their personal development.
- Pupils make good progress over time and begin to catch up with their peer group.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils' attitudes to learning improve and they learn how to manage their behaviour better.
- Almost all primary-age pupils and most pupils in key stage 3 and Year 10 return successfully to mainstream schools.
- Year 11 pupils stay at Octagon to take GCSE and other qualifications. They achieve much better results than pupils in referral units nationally.
- The local advisory board and the board of the trust know the school well and provide a good balance of challenge and support.
- Teaching is good because staff plan carefully to meet the wide range of pupils' individual needs.
- Regular checks on the quality of teaching mean that staff can be given support to help them to improve their skills.
- Attractive displays encourage everyone to aim high. These promote British values such as respect for others and the rule of law.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are helped to learn how to stay safe outside school.
- Attendance has improved dramatically over the last three years. Most pupils understand why it is important to attend school.
- Most parents are positive about the school and believe that their children make progress and are well cared for.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Teachers are not always using questioning effectively enough and sometimes do not have high enough expectations of their pupils.
- Teachers are not as clear about the standards expected in the primary curriculum as they are about the secondary curriculum.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers understand the content of the primary national curriculum and what pupils are expected to know, understand and be able to do at different stages so that:
 - teachers raise their expectations for the rate of progress in the primary classes
 - key stage 3 and key stage 4 teachers can identify where their pupils may have gaps in their knowledge and understanding and plan more effectively to meet their needs.
- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations for what pupils can achieve
 - use questioning more effectively to check pupils' understanding and identify where misconceptions may be holding pupils back.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The previous pupil referral unit was judged inadequate in November 2013. Since taking over Octagon in April 2014, the TBAP Multi-Academy Trust has built an extremely strong and cohesive team. The very clear sense of purpose and direction has transformed the education of pupils at the school.
- Leaders have ensured that the school is securely good and are now determined to see that it becomes outstanding as rapidly as possible. Staff understand the direction the school is taking and support the leadership team very well. They share the belief that the school is rapidly improving and want to see this improvement continue.
- Senior staff have used independent challenge partners to check their own very accurate evaluation of the school's effectiveness. This has given a much sharper focus to development planning.
- The analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses is highly accurate and is supported by a very precise action plan focused on the areas that will really make a difference. For example, ensuring that all teaching is high quality and improving the curriculum are high priorities so that pupils can go back into mainstream schools or move on successfully to further education, employment or training. Consequently, the rate of return to mainstream education is much higher than in most pupil referral units.
- Senior staff have put very effective performance management into place. Regular observations of teaching and other activities provide a wide range of useful information for senior leaders and individual staff. They provide invaluable feedback to teachers, who are keen to develop and improve their work.
- Continuing professional development opportunities are made available for all staff. They are very well supported by the regular training available through the trust as well as high-quality in-house training. Teachers are encouraged to work together to improve their skills, and peer observation has had a very positive impact on how teachers use planning and assessment to improve pupils' responses in lessons.
- Staff who provide the range of support services, for example to help pupils to learn to manage their emotions and behaviour, also have access to high-quality support and training.
- The school's staff work closely and successfully with a wide range of external agencies to make sure that pupils and families receive the support they need.
- The partnership with local mainstream schools is strong and they and the local authority value the work of Octagon. Staff have worked hard to establish good relationships and a highly successful support programme to prepare pupils for their return to mainstream schools. As a result, it is rare for a placement to break down.
- The provision for older pupils to move on to further education or training is good but the success rate is not quite as high as it is for younger pupils going back into school. This is an area that senior staff are working hard to improve.

- The school is genuinely inclusive in its approach. Pupil premium funding is well targeted so that disadvantaged pupils start to catch up with their peer group. Where pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, staff plan programmes that are designed to meet those needs. Pupils who speak English as an additional language have similarly good provision. Senior staff rigorously monitor support for impact and amend it to take account of progress.
- The curriculum has been broadened so that it more closely matches the mainstream curriculum. The strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum enables pupils to improve their basic skills quickly.
- The school strongly promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons and the enrichment programme, which gives them a wide range of opportunities to take part in different activities, develop new interests and learn new skills.
- Pupils are encouraged to discuss and debate important issues that are relevant to their lives. They also have opportunities to play an active part in the life of the school. They say that they are consulted and that their views are taken seriously.
- Relationships with parents are very good. Parents particularly appreciate the quality of feedback they get from staff and the speed with which they are contacted if there are any problems, so that matters are not allowed to escalate.

Governance of the school

- The local advisory board has responsibility delegated to it from the main board of the trust. The local board reports on how well pupils are achieving, the quality of teaching, and behaviour and safety. It holds the school's leaders firmly to account for the quality of work in these areas.
- Board members are highly knowledgeable about the work of the school. They know its strengths and where it needs to improve further. Members provide very effective challenge and support by asking sharp, probing questions during their meetings, as well as rigorously scrutinising reports and visiting the school regularly.
- The trust board ensures that performance management procedures are in place for all staff and that they contribute strongly to improving the quality of teaching and learning. They also ensure that pupil premium funding is used effectively to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Safeguarding arrangements are reviewed regularly to ensure that all legal requirements are met and that pupils are kept safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding and related policies are kept up to date and reviewed regularly. Checks on staff appointments are in line with requirements, and record keeping on all aspects of safeguarding is comprehensive and meticulous.

- Staff and governors receive regular and thorough training in safeguarding. Staff show considerable awareness of issues that their pupils may face. These include radicalisation, the impact of gang culture and the risks of female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Staff share information at daily briefings and report concerns using the agreed systems.
- Staff are very aware of the possible links between attendance and safeguarding risks. Daily monitoring of behaviour and attendance, and rapid follow-up, help staff to pick up quickly on any concerns and put support into place. Any off-site provision used is carefully monitored.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and that the school helps them to stay safe. Surveys of parents' views confirm that they believe that their children are safe. They appreciate the level of care that staff show and how well they keep in touch with parents.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- All pupils are carefully assessed soon after arriving at Octagon to help teachers match work accurately to pupils' needs and see where additional support might be needed. Progress is then measured from these starting points.
- Teaching takes place in small groups, or on a one-to-one basis. Lessons are well planned, building carefully on what pupils already know and can do, and what they need to do next.
- Pupils who have been at Octagon for some time know how well they are doing. They know what targets have been set to help them with their learning and this enables them to make good progress.
- In some subjects, where teaching is both challenging and supportive, pupils make excellent progress, as for example in English, art, food, physical education and computing. This is not consistent enough across all subjects and phases of the school and sometimes expectations of pupils are not high enough.
- Teachers regularly give pupils opportunities to use their reading skills in different subjects. This helps pupils, including the most and least able, to improve their comprehension skills.
- Most teachers question pupils carefully to check their understanding. The most effective questioning enables pupils to learn from their misconceptions and develop their ideas in more depth.
- This was particularly evident in Year 10 English, where pupils were able to analyse and explain complex ideas about mental health issues. In art, pupils were encouraged to think deeply about how to improve the quality of their work.
- Assessment systems are in place for all subjects in the secondary phase. Staff are increasingly using these to track pupils' progress and ensure a good match of work to current attainment.
- GCSE assessment criteria are used increasingly effectively, as for example in physical education, where pupils are developing good coaching skills as part of their practical assessment.

- Teachers' knowledge of how to assess the primary curriculum is not yet as strong as it is for the secondary curriculum. This also affects teaching in the secondary phase, as it makes it more difficult for staff to understand what they need to do to make sure that pupils who missed time in primary school can catch up.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Almost all pupils arrive with a negative attitude towards school and often a sense of failure. All staff, whether teachers, learning support or pastoral staff, work very effectively together to change this. As a result, a strong culture of success permeates the school.
- Staff work well with pupils, whether in lessons, one-to-one sessions or enrichment activities, to help them make progress and experience success. For example, pupils in a cookery enrichment class were very successfully making pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. Other pupils work as 'sports leaders' with local primary school children or take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- As a result of the school's work, almost all pupils who arrive at the school in the primary phase and in Years 7 to 10 make a successful return to a mainstream school. Year 11 pupils usually stay on to complete examination courses.
- Pupils are given good guidance about careers and options for further study. Discussion with some Year 8 and Year 9 pupils showed that they had begun to think about future careers. The proportion of Year 11 pupils who go on to college, employment or apprenticeships is well above the national figure for pupil referral units, and close to the national figure for all schools.
- The premises are well cared for and maintained, which helps to create a pleasant environment where learning is valued. Attractive displays celebrate success and give pupils good information about their future options as well as strongly promoting British values.
- The success of the school's work can be seen in the improving attendance. It is much higher than in most pupil referral units and has gone up from below 65% to above 80%. Persistent absence has declined. Senior staff are determined to see that this improves further, and the follow-up when pupils are absent is rapid and rigorous.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are friendly and polite to visitors and most are willing to talk about what they are doing. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good because relationships between staff and pupils are good and pupils believe that staff want to help them.

- Staff generally manage behaviour well and any individual difficulties were not allowed to interrupt the learning of others. At times where the quality of teaching is less effective, behaviour sometimes starts to slip.
- Pupils said that bullying is relatively rare. Pupils feel safe, and are confident that staff will sort out any difficulties. The local police community support officer works very effectively with the school to support pupils, helping them learn to manage their behaviour better and to learn how to stay safe outside school.
- The school keeps detailed records of all incidents. Staff use these to help them identify where support or provision needs to change. For example, the timing of the lunch hour and the activities available for pupils were reviewed so that pupils had a good break and were ready for the afternoon work.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- It is not possible to compare progress and results for pupils with the national picture because numbers in each year group are small and year groups vary considerably in their ability and prior learning.
- Pupils join the school with very variable knowledge, skills and understanding but most are below expectations for their age, often because they have missed a lot of school.
- Almost all pupils make good progress from their starting points across all subjects. Progress is particularly good in English, art, physical education, computing and food. Even those who are reluctant attenders or who find school life difficult make some progress. This enables most pupils to return successfully to mainstream schools.
- Records of current and previous pupils indicate that they make very good progress in improving basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Lively practical work, for example when learning their multiplication tables, helps them to gain confidence and begin to catch up.
- In 2016, all pupils leaving Year 11 achieved nationally recognised qualifications in a range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, art, physical education and computing. The most able pupils achieve at GCSE level, while the less able pupils gain qualifications at entry level.
- The school matches the courses offered to pupils' needs, interests and abilities. For example, if a pupil wishes to follow a particular career path, he or she may take a vocational course at a local college while attending Octagon for other lessons.
- Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to improve disadvantaged pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, although reading and writing have been more of a priority than mathematics.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have good literacy skills, so that they read independently without the need for additional resources or support.

- Primary-age pupils follow a phonics course similar to those used in mainstream schools. In the secondary classes, an online reading programme has been introduced to boost pupils' skills through regular practice.
- Pupils practise using their writing skills in different subjects and for different purposes. For example, in history, key stage 3 pupils were writing about the causes of the First World War.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 140665 |
| Local authority | Haringey |
| Inspection number | 10023568 |

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

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| Type of school | Pupil referral unit |
| School category | Academy alternative provision sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 48 |
| Appropriate authority | Academy trust |
| Chair | Paul Dix |
| Executive Headteacher | Angela Tempany |
| Headteacher | Kaz Birk |
| Telephone number | 0203 1080345 |
| Website | www.tbap.org.uk/octagon |
| Email address | head@tbap.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The Octagon pupil referral unit serves the needs of pupils aged five to 16 years who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties that have resulted in permanent exclusion from school or the risk of permanent exclusion.
- The predecessor pupil referral unit was judged inadequate in November 2013, and in April 2014, Octagon became an academy sponsored by TBAP Multi-Academy Trust. It is one of a group of schools managed by an executive headteacher who was appointed in the summer term of 2016, having previously been headteacher of Octagon. The current headteacher of Octagon was appointed in January 2017.

- The school currently has no pupils from key stage 1 and just under 50 pupils from key stages 2, 3 and 4. About a quarter of the pupils have an education, health and care plan because they have special educational needs and/or disabilities due to their emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and ethnic heritages. The largest groups are of Black African or Black Caribbean origin. Around half of the pupils are supported by pupil premium funding.
- Pupils in the primary provision are normally on relatively short-term placements. The aim is for them to return to mainstream school within a term. Pupils who join the school in key stage 3 or Year 10 are also supported to return to school. Pupils in Year 11 usually stay until the end of the academic year to complete their GCSE courses.
- The school uses alternative provision with local colleges for individual pupils where this is appropriate for their needs, for example to follow a course such as beauty therapy which the school cannot provide. This is usually for one day a week.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed work in the primary classes and in most subjects in the secondary classes through learning walks with members of the leadership team. The inspection team also heard pupils read and examined the quality of work in books from across the school.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including safeguarding records and procedures, records of checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, curriculum plans and local advisory board records.
- The team held meetings with pupils, senior and middle leaders, members of the school staff, the chair of the local advisory board, the chief executive of the TBAP Multi-Academy Trust and the head of the teaching school alliance. Telephone conversations were held with the chair of the trust board and a representative of the London Borough of Haringey, which commissions places at the school.
- No parents made their views known on the online questionnaire (Parent View) but inspectors had access to school surveys on parental views and spoke to one parent who requested a telephone conversation.
- The team took account of the views of 20 staff who completed the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Grace Marriott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Paddick

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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