

Ormiston Denes Academy

Yarmouth Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 4AH

Inspection dates

26–27 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils in 2016, including disadvantaged pupils, did not make enough progress from their starting points.
- The Ormiston Academies Trust and the local governing body had concerns about the school's provision in 2015/16; however, they waited too long to take action.
- Teaching, learning and assessment remains variable. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially at key stage 3, are too low.
- Some pupils do not yet consistently receive appropriate support to meet their specific needs in lessons. This includes those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who require help to develop their literacy skills.
- Although middle leaders are beginning to bring about more sustained improvements in their areas, they are still too generous about the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress, especially at key stage 3.
- Leaders are not consistently precise enough in their evaluation about the impact that their work is having on the outcomes of different groups of pupils.
- Although improving, absence rates remain too high. This is particularly the case for both disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Despite improvements in behaviour, a small number of pupils are not yet behaving appropriately. Leaders' use of fixed-term and permanent exclusion remains much higher than the national average.

The school has the following strengths

- Despite the delay in responding, the trust has acted rapidly since the summer of 2016. Their 'hands on' approach is now ensuring that they have a more secure understanding of the impact of the actions being taken to improve pupils' achievement.
- The new principal and senior leadership team are working swiftly and effectively to bring more sustained improvements to the school.
- High numbers of pupils secured appropriate destinations for their post-16 education, training or employment in 2015/16.
- Senior leaders' thorough monitoring of teaching is bringing about improvements in current pupils' achievement, particularly at key stage 4.
- Pupils and parents are positive about the improvements in the school since September.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that middle leaders use pupils' work more accurately when making judgements about the quality of teaching, so that they can ensure that pupils are making accelerated progress from their various starting points, especially at key stage 3
 - continuing to support leaders, especially those who are newer to post, to be more precise in how they evaluate the impact that they are having on pupils' learning and achievement, especially disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who need support to develop their literacy skills
 - ensuring that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is effective in securing quicker progress for pupils at key stage 3, as it is now starting to do for key stage 4 pupils.
- Raise standards of achievement, through improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that teaching meets the needs of pupils so that they make rapid gains in their learning over time, most notably those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who need help to develop their literacy skills
 - continuing to raise expectations about what pupils should be able to achieve, including the most able, and disadvantaged pupils, particularly in key stage 3.
- Continue to improve pupils' development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - further raising the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - continuing to work with pupils who struggle to form positive relationships with one another, so that they can resolve conflicts more appropriately and confidently
 - further reducing the incidences of poorer behaviour that lead to the last resort of fixed-term and permanent exclusion.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, a legacy of inconsistent teaching, poor decisions about early entry for examinations, and fragile leadership has resulted in weaker outcomes for pupils. Despite their concerns about the quality of provision, the trust and local governing body did not act quickly enough in 2015/16 to support the school in raising achievement.
- Since the summer of 2016, the trust has responded more effectively. They have secured and mentored a number of new senior and middle leaders, including a new principal, to swiftly achieve effective school improvement. Learning from their previous mistakes, the trust has reorganised their regional structure so that they are 'hands on' in checking on the actions being taken to improve the school. Consequently, they now know the school well, and are ensuring that leaders have the necessary capacity to improve.
- The new principal, well supported by the trust and his senior team, has acted effectively since the disappointing results in 2016. New line management accountabilities, improved assessment systems, and more precise methods to monitor and support pupils who need help to catch up, are starting to bring improvements to pupils' achievement. However, it is still too early to see the full impact of these changes.
- The integrity of the new principal to make significant and essential changes to pupils' provision can be clearly seen in his well thought out curriculum and timetabling changes this year. His calm and reasoned approach has been welcomed by staff, parents and pupils, who have accepted his changes readily. This swift action has ensured that current key stage 3 and 4 pupils are being given more purposeful learning time and resources to fully develop the skills necessary to be successful.
- Previously, too many pupils had been disadvantaged by an ill-considered key stage 4 curriculum which allowed pupils to sit examinations when they were not adequately prepared for them. The new principal has worked tenaciously to support current Year 11. These pupils are effusive in their praise for new leaders and are confident that the additional support that they are now receiving is making up for their poorer performance in the examinations they sat in Years 9 and 10.
- Leaders are now using the trust's network of support more thoroughly and effectively to raise achievement. This is particularly the case in key stage 4. For example, predictions of pupils' performance were overly generous last year. Leaders and staff have now sought greater guidance from other trust schools, especially where there is examination expertise in English, mathematics, science and the humanities. Consequently, there is now greater consistency among staff about how they are assessing pupils in key stage 4.
- Senior leaders have a thorough understanding of the quality of teaching in the school. They are ensuring that those who need to improve their teaching are being supported. They are also working alongside the trust, including the teaching school, and other providers, to develop more teachers 'in-house'. However, teaching, while improving,

currently remains too inconsistent, especially at key stage 3.

- Middle leaders are too generous about the quality of teaching in their respective subject areas. They are not sharp enough in how they use pupils' work when making judgements about the progress that different groups of pupils are making. Consequently, they are not consistently ensuring that teaching is facilitating rapid enough improvement, especially in key stage 3.
- The school's enrichment curriculum, alongside the wealth of extra-curricular provision, is a real strength in the school. Pupils relish the opportunities that they receive to 'opt' into an area of interest, including sporting, charity and academic options. In particular, the school offers pupils more access to a wider range of languages, including Latin, as part of the school's work to further encourage pupils' enjoyment and participation in languages.
- Leaders have improved the support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities since the previous inspection. For example, leaders monitor the funding that they receive more effectively and how it is used appropriately through programmes such as the 'aspire centre' in the school. This programme provides high-quality intervention and support that is bespoke to pupils' identified needs, and helps them to catch up where they need to.
- As part of this ongoing work through the aspire centre, leaders are also starting to use the Year 7 catch-up with increasing effectiveness. Small group tuition, additional support in lessons and reading programmes are beginning to make a real difference to those pupils who need to catch up with their classmates when they arrive at the school.
- Although interventions and additional support are ensuring that pupils are catching up with their peers, leaders are not yet ensuring that they are as effective in monitoring their wider impact on pupils' achievement. For example, they do not consistently check that pupils are being as well supported when they return to their mainstream lessons. This is especially the case for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils, and those who have lower levels of literacy and need greater guidance to catch up with their peers.

Governance of the school

- Both the trust and local governing body identified concerns about the provision prior to the 2016 outcomes. They had used their own visits to the school, and the regular visits from Department for Education advisers, to begin to challenge past leaders about the validity of the information they were being provided with. However, they did not act quickly enough to ensure that pupils achieved well in 2016.
- Since the 2016 outcomes, the trust and local governing body have worked together closely to bring improvements in the quality of governance. The work of the trust's managing director, who is acting as an executive headteacher, alongside routine visits from the Department for Education team, are providing governors and trustees with rigorous, quality-assured information about the steady improvements being brought about.
- Governors are ensuring that leaders deploy the school's additional funding for

disadvantaged pupils with increasing effectiveness. This funding is being used effectively to support pupils' often complex and challenging pastoral needs. As a result, attendance is improving. The new provision for these pupils at key stage 4 is also ensuring that they are now making better progress. However, the monitoring of the impact of this funding on pupils in key stage 3 is not yet as robust.

- Governors have a good understanding of their statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. They visit regularly, check the staff recruitment procedures, and ensure that they ask pertinent questions about how vulnerable pupils are being cared for, in particular children looked after.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are well trained in the most up-to-date guidance, including 'Prevent', which focuses on preventing pupils from being vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. As a result, staff are aware of the signs of potential abuse and neglect, and make appropriate referrals to the designated safeguarding team.
- The team of safeguarding personnel throughout the school, including the house teams and the family welfare officer, are well managed by the designated safeguarding leader and safeguarding officer. This team's collective efforts ensure that pupils receive timely and effective support from a range of different external and internal services as required.
- Leaders ensure that they liaise appropriately with the local authority over the most vulnerable pupils, including children looked after, those in alternative curriculum, pupils who go missing from education, and those who leave the school part way through a year.
- The trust routinely check the quality of safeguarding provision, through their regular audits. These reviews check on the recruitment, training and quality of referrals made by staff. They also check on the quality of leaders' work with external agencies and the local authority, to ensure that all reasonable actions are being taken to secure the safety of pupils, both in and out of school.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe, both online and in the wider world. They access a number of lessons, such as citizenship, and assemblies, which give additional guidance about how they can stay safe, in an age-appropriate way. Pupils say that they feel safe, and that there are staff who they can go to when they are worried about anything.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment across the school remains variable, especially, although not exclusively, at key stage 3.
- Some weaker teaching, difficulties in recruiting teachers, and temporary staffing, have resulted in school leaders having to make difficult decisions about where to deploy staff most effectively. Although leaders' decisions are beginning to improve the provision in key stage 4, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school more

generally is still inconsistent.

- Staff have worked quickly this year to develop curriculum and assessment strategies, so that pupils are better supported to make progress across year groups and key stages. Teachers' work to link up with high-performing schools in the trust is helping to bring greater consistency between teachers in applying this assessment at key stage 4. However, teachers' expectations about what pupils can achieve remain variable, and often too low, particularly in key stage 3.
- Teachers' planning and support for pupils' specific needs, most notably those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who need additional support to improve their literacy, is inconsistent. Teachers and other adults are not consistently ensuring that they use precise strategies to support these pupils well enough so they make faster progress from their varied starting points.
- Leaders have brought improvements in the quality of feedback given to pupils this year, and this is beginning to be more consistently applied across the school. Pupils are increasingly using this guidance to improve their understanding and/or work, and make better progress. This is especially apparent among the most able pupils.
- However, where pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or where pupils are hampered by absence, such as some disadvantaged pupils, it is not always clear how staff use precise guidance and support strategies to ensure that these pupils are able to keep up and/or catch up with their peers. Consequently, teachers are not consistently supporting pupils well enough to catch up where there are specific gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- There is a core of stronger practice in teaching, learning and assessment in the school, especially, although not exclusively, at key stage 4. Where practice is more effective, teachers have an in-depth understanding of the subject content, and the exam specifications. They use this to plan appropriately for pupils' learning over time, so that pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Leaders continue to use internal and external systems to further improve pupils' attendance at the school. Since the previous inspection, the overall attendance of pupils has improved, as has the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. However, attendance remains stubbornly below the national average. Moreover, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is still too low.
- Leaders have invested resources and time to secure a pastoral system which meets the varied needs of pupils in the school community. Pupils and parents appreciate the wealth of support on offer, including the house system, school counsellors, the raising attainment team and the family welfare officer.
- A significant minority of pupils and parents raised concerns about the inconsistency of

some of this pastoral support. Leaders acknowledged this and have reviewed the line management systems, which are now alleviating the inconsistencies in this provision.

- Leaders are also working more closely with those pupils who sometimes struggle to form positive relationships, to improve their understanding of how to resolve conflicts appropriately, and to refine their perception of what 'bullying' is.
- Most pupils feel safe and well cared for. Pupils and parents in particular are more positive about the changes being brought to the school under the new principal and his leadership team. Pupils commented on the additional site improvements, improved behaviour and their positive relationships with staff. Most pupils and parents commented that the school deals effectively with any bullying that arises.
- The support and care for vulnerable pupils is a strength in the school's provision. For example, the significant numbers of children looked after are diligently monitored, and most value their education and attend very well. Where this is not the case, school staff work with external agencies and carers to improve the situation. This level of monitoring is also effective for the few pupils who access alternative provision off-site.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Although pupils, staff and parents acknowledge improvements in the behaviour across the school, there remains a significant core of pupils who do not meet the school's high expectations on behaviour. Consequently, leaders' use of more significant punishments for these pupils, such as fixed-term and permanent exclusion, remains much higher than the national average.
- Pupils identified that while behaviour in lessons is much improved this year, there is still some low-level disruption in lessons, most notably where there is inconsistency in the teaching, and high staff turnover. However, pupils say that there is less temporary teaching this year. In particular, they say that the changes made by the principal to the curriculum and school day are making a real difference to the quality of their learning.
- Where lessons meet their needs, and interest them, pupils show high levels of participation and engagement. This often leads to them making better progress in those lessons.
- Pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly way. Most wear their uniform appropriately, are polite and friendly, and behave appropriately in lessons and at break and lunch.
- Pupils are particularly effusive across the key stages about the enrichment curriculum, and their opportunities to undertake trips and visits, as well as extra-curricular clubs.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils arrive at the school with prior attainment that is significantly below the national average. In 2016, although there was a slight increase in the numbers of pupils attaining a good pass in GCSE in mathematics and English, pupils did not make enough progress from their various starting points across a range of subjects, most notably in

English, science and geography. The most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, did not make enough progress from their various starting points.

- Leaders have acted swiftly to bring about improvements in subjects, especially, but not exclusively, in key stage 4. New leadership in some areas, and more specific use of the trust's wealth of examiners, is ensuring that teachers and leaders are more secure in identifying pupils' needs against the examination syllabus, and in bringing greater consistency to their predictions. This is bringing further improvements, especially in English and mathematics at key stage 4.
- Leaders' focus on creating more precise support for Year 11 is helping pupils to fill in gaps created by previously weaker teaching. Equally, leaders are ensuring that Year 10 pupils are receiving earlier, and more secure, support. This includes a more effective use of the additional funding that they receive. This is making a real difference to those pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in helping them to catch up. School information and inspection evidence indicate that these pupils are now making better progress from their starting points.
- Inspection evidence and school information suggest that pupils in key stage 3 are making steady gains in their learning, especially in mathematics, English, history, geography and a number of foundation subjects. However, there remains a variability in teachers' assessment practice. As a result, pupils' needs are not yet being met well enough in classrooms to ensure that pupils make consistently accelerated progress across the curriculum. This is particularly apparent for pupils in science, the most able, including those who are disadvantaged, those who have low levels of literacy, and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The provision for pupils who attend off-site education has been better reviewed this year, and is meeting the needs of the pupils who access it. The attendance of pupils, their well-being and quality of education they receive, are all being well-monitored, to ensure that these pupils achieve, and secure, next steps in their education and training that are relevant to their abilities, aspirations and interests.
- Pupils are receiving increasingly high-quality information, advice and guidance which is enabling more of them to go on to appropriate post-16 destinations. In 2016, school information indicates that almost all pupils went on to further training or education, and remained at these destinations. This includes high proportions of disadvantaged pupils, and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This was a significant increase on the previous two years. Current Year 11 pupils are effusive in their praise of leaders and staff for the diligent support that they have received to secure a place at their chosen destination after their examinations in the summer.

School details

Unique reference number	139403
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10021246

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

Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	993
Appropriate authority	The Ormiston Academies Trust
Chair	Tina Ellis
Principal	Ben Driver
Telephone number	01502 574474
Website	www.ormistonden.es.co.uk
Email address	info@ormistonden.es.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4– 5 February 2015

Information about this school

- Following the results in summer 2016, the current principal was appointed as an interim principal from August 2016. This position was made permanent following interviews in January 2017. Alongside this appointment, a significant number of appointments were made to the senior and middle leadership team.
- An executive headteacher from the Ormiston Academies Trust supports school leaders.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- Pupils enter with attainment that is significantly lower than expected for their age.
- A small number of pupils access alternative provision in the locality, at The Attic Learning Centre, Horatio House, and Harbour Pupil Referral Unit.

- 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 school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school in both the core and foundation subjects. Almost all of these observations were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior leaders and middle leaders. Inspectors also met with the managing director for the Eastern area of the Ormiston Academies Trust, a number of trust advisers, and governors from both the local governing body and the trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised work from across key stages 3 and 4, including in English, mathematics, science, history and geography.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school’s self-evaluation, its school development plan, minutes of governors’ meetings, safeguarding records, alternative provision information, children looked after files, pupils’ progress information, and school policies and procedures.
- Inspectors analysed 84 responses from Ofsted’s online survey of parents, Parent View, including free-text commentary provided by some parents. Inspectors also held telephone conversations with some parents of pupils who accessed alternative provision.
- Inspectors analysed 65 responses from Ofsted’s online survey of staff.
- There were no pupils who completed Ofsted’s online survey for pupils. Inspectors spoke informally to pupils at break, lunch and in lessons. Inspectors also met formally with pupils to discuss their experiences.
- Inspectors also spoke with representatives from a number of alternative providers and met with an adviser from the regional schools commissioner’s office.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Gerard Batty	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Fletcher	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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