

Oscott Academy

St Martin's Church Centre, 140 Witton Lodge Road, Erdington, Birmingham, West Midlands B23 5AP

Inspection dates

20–22 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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

- Leaders have created and embedded a culture based on 'family' values. This is understood by all staff and pupils. It helps to settle pupils into the safe and supportive learning environment.
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare are strengths of the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive, and support pupils in all areas of their learning. The provision of high-quality, impartial careers advice prepares pupils well for their next steps, enabling them to make informed choices.
- Pupils join the school with low starting points; some having missed significant amounts of formal education. Pupils make good progress across all areas of the curriculum from their starting points.
- For some pupils, attendance is low. While leaders engage well with parents to identify and overcome barriers to attendance, this remains a challenge for a small number of pupils.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum. It provides pupils with the ability to develop and secure skills in core subjects as well as learning how to keep themselves safe and prepare for their next steps.
- Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan exciting lessons that are closely match to pupils' learning needs and which engage and motivate pupils. Targets are challenging and aspirational. As a result, pupils make rapid gains in their learning.
- On rare occasions, teachers' questioning does not promote most-able pupils' deep knowledge and understanding. As a result, some pupils do not consistently benefit from additional stretch and challenge.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress of the most able pupils, by ensuring that teachers' questioning effectively deepens their understanding.
- Improve the attendance of a small group of pupils, by:
 - establishing the particular barriers to their attendance
 - continuing to work with parents to overcome these barriers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards have been met.
- The headteacher works hard to instil a culture based around 'family' values of respect and supporting one another. He communicates this culture effectively so that staff, pupils, parents and stakeholders understand it. Parents recognise this culture as one of the reasons that pupils settle quickly and form trusting relationships with staff.
- The headteacher has high expectations of pupils and staff. Staff are ambitious for pupils and have high aspirations for them. As a result, pupils respond well to the challenging targets set for them and make good academic progress.
- The headteacher has a sound understanding of the quality of teaching and learning, and knows where improvements are needed through rigorous and accurate monitoring.
- Staff responses to an inspection questionnaire indicate that all staff believe that the school is well led and managed. They say that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support teachers' improvement. All staff say that they feel well supported working in the school. They are proud to work in the organisation and feel that their work is valued. One member of staff said, 'Oscott Academy allows me to make a real difference to the lives of our young people.'
- Staff are highly vigilant and responsive to pupils' welfare. Staff work hard to keep their pupils safe, strengthening the curriculum with opportunities to raise awareness of the dangers of abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.
- The headteacher engages well with parents, carers and other stakeholders to support all pupils. Relationships are highly effective, fostering a multi-agency approach towards pupils. Parents and other stakeholders speak highly of school leaders and feel that the school is well led and managed.
- The curriculum has been well designed to match pupils' needs. It offers breadth and balance. Pupils are able to work towards both functional skills and GCSEs in English and mathematics. They also have access to qualifications in science, information and communication technology (ICT), personal, social and health education (PSHE), and art.
- Leaders' development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong. The school recognises the importance of preparing pupils for life in modern Britain and has created a culture of respect and tolerance. The curriculum is supported with rich extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures and encourages respect for the needs and rights of others. For example, pupils have enjoyed visits to a war museum and have celebrated Christmas around the world by learning about the differences in celebrations. They have sampled food from around the world and engaged in drama projects tackling relevant themes including drugs, knife crime, and the care system.
- The arrangements for monitoring pupils' performance are effective. Assessments are frequent and moderated for accuracy. Results are used carefully to inform the next steps in learning. Leaders scrutinise assessment information carefully to ensure that pupils who are at risk of falling behind are quickly identified. Appropriate supporting strategies are

then put in place to enable them to catch up.

- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective and, as a result, these pupils achieve well. Targets are robust and routinely reviewed. The pastoral leader has commenced training in special educational needs and is using this knowledge to good effect when planning interventions and support strategies.
- Some systems have yet to be formalised. For example, leaders' and teachers' performance is managed on an informal basis. The headteacher is in the process of formalising appraisal arrangements with the support of a school improvement partner. Staff are aware of their personal targets on an informal basis and all understand the culture and the ethos of the school and key priorities for improvement.

Governance

- The headteacher is also the proprietor of the school. Currently, there are no formal arrangements in place for external scrutiny, challenge and support. At present, the school is supported by a school improvement partner on an informal basis. The headteacher has plans to formalise this arrangement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff are appropriately trained and highly vigilant. Nothing is left to chance. As a result, pupils feel safe. The school has a safeguarding policy published on its website. This policy is detailed and makes clear the procedures for dealing with safeguarding matters.
- There are two designated safeguarding leads. Both are appropriately trained in this area and one of them is available at all times. Parents and staff say that the school is a safe environment.
- The headteacher has produced comprehensive risk assessments for all pupils, activities and off-site activities. These are robust and take into account identified risks and actions to reduce these risks.
- Staff know pupils well and respond swiftly to any changes in their behaviour. They are highly vigilant and supervise pupils fully throughout the school day. Staff are appropriately trained and are confident and competent in safeguarding pupils.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, the comprehensive PSHE curriculum provides pupils with an understanding of appropriate relationships, risks of radicalisation and online safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Some pupils arrive at Oscott Academy having missed long periods of their formal education. As a result, their starting points are often lower than is typical for their age. Teachers assess pupils quickly and set appropriate, ambitious targets. The school's information shows that pupils catch up quickly and make rapid progress. For example, some pupils enter the school at entry level 1 or 2 in English and mathematics, and achieve level 2 qualifications in both subjects.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. There are well-established routines to ensure

that pupils arrive punctually. Lessons start on time, pupils settle well and little time is wasted.

- Teachers use secure subject knowledge and imaginative strategies to engage and sustain pupils' interest. Teachers carefully plan learning opportunities to motivate and inspire. As a result, pupils maintain their focus and remain engaged for the duration of tasks.
- Teachers provide useful feedback. They use verbal feedback effectively to reshape tasks and tackle pupils' misconceptions, as well as to praise and recognise their efforts.
- Pupils recognise that they make good progress. They are proud of their achievements and value the small group sizes that contribute to this. Pupils say that they have learned things in mathematics that they were previously unable to do, such as problem-solving and using reasoning skills. Pupils recall previous learning well and are able to move on to more complex tasks with confidence.
- In English, pupils use inference well and are able to deduce meanings from texts. They read aloud with confidence and support one another with trickier words. Pupils develop speaking and listening skills, they participate actively and appropriately in discussions, and show respect for the views of others. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to read throughout the curriculum. Pupils use short texts, analysis of newspaper reports and journals. They also enjoy reading short stories and have recently completed 'The Polish teacher's tie' and 'The day the wasps drowned'. This approach has been effective in reigniting pupils' love of reading.
- The teaching of science is particularly strong. Pupils are well engaged through imaginative and creative strategies. They enjoy practical experiments and their responses demonstrate their progress. Questioning is particularly effective in science, as is the development of pupils' use of scientific terminology. As a result, all pupils have achieved entry level qualifications, with a small number of pupils able to sit entry level examinations a year earlier than planned due to rapid gains in knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders have created a positive and safe culture for learning. Pupils are not afraid to say that they do not understand; support is highly effective and there is a culture of respect and support for one another. Pupils offer help to one another. As a result, pupils are resilient. They are keen to do well and are able to learn from their mistakes.
- Assessment is rigorous and frequent. The school assesses pupils every half term and provides accurate and informative feedback for parents. Parents recognise how well their children are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers and leaders celebrate pupils' success regularly. During daily assemblies, teachers recognise achievements and use praise effectively where pupils have worked particularly well.
- Most of the time, teachers use questioning effectively to promote deeper understanding. As a result, the majority of pupils respond well to higher level challenge. On rare occasions, for a small number of the most able pupils, teachers do not use deeper questioning, which limits pupils' ability to extend their responses.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school prepares pupils well for their next steps. Pupils benefit from independent, impartial careers advice and support throughout the process of their applications to further education. All pupils produce a personal development plan with a careers adviser. This outlines their choice of career and the routes available to them. Action plans are robust and staff direct pupils to external agencies when appropriate. Staff also accompany pupils to college interviews. Destinations information shows that all pupils from previous cohorts have progressed into further education or apprenticeships.
- The school promotes all aspects of pupils' welfare. Pupils are safe and they feel safe. The curriculum provides them with many opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe, including adopting a healthy lifestyle, keeping themselves safe online and within the community, and an awareness of the risks of radicalisation.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Many pupils have been referred to Oscott Academy having experienced behavioural difficulties in previous settings. Through the development of positive, trusting relationships, a high staff-to-pupil ratio and high expectations, pupils demonstrate positive behaviour in and out of lessons. Pupils' good conduct reflects the high expectations of the school.
- Strong PSHE provision impacts positively upon pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. It creates opportunities for pupils to learn about positive relationships and celebrate differences within society.
- Pupils demonstrate positive behaviour in their lessons. They show resilience and are keen to learn and develop their skills.
- Pupils understand the school's behaviour policy. Staff apply the policy consistently. Pupils respond quickly to staff instructions. As a result, the school is an orderly environment. Pupils feel that behaviour is good and that staff manage behaviour fairly.
- Pupils' behaviour in and outside of lessons is positive. Pupils have forged positive relationships with peers and staff. They are welcoming, polite and respectful. Pupils use manners well and speak appropriately. They are positive ambassadors for their school.
- In response to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, all staff said that the school manages behaviour well and that they are supported by leaders in managing behaviour. As a result of consistent application of the behaviour policy, bullying is extremely rare and pupils say that they feel safe in school.
- On rare occasions when pupils display off-task behaviour, this is addressed swiftly and does not disrupt pupils' learning.
- Pupils' attendance is improving. Many pupils arrive at the school having missed a high proportion of their education previously. The school works in partnership with parents to improve attendance. Leaders have developed a rigorous process for following up non-attendance. It is an effective system that has a positive impact on improving attendance

over time. Parents recognise these improvements in attendance. As one commented, 'My child is eager to get up in the morning.' However, some pupils' attendance remains too low. Leaders continue to work on this.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' work shows that they are making good progress, particularly in English, mathematics and science. This is also the case for the most able pupils.
- The school's assessment information is accurate. From starting points that are often lower than age-related expectations, pupils catch up quickly and make rapid progress. All current pupils have progressed from entry level in both English and mathematics to level 1 and level 2 in both subjects.
- In art, pupils have made good progress from very low starting points. Teachers take a nurturing approach and gradually build up pupils' skills. Pupils are now developing confidence in techniques and developing their drawing skills.
- Teachers use information from previous settings where it is available and also assesses pupils when they arrive at the school. The school's information shows that boys generally arrive with lower starting points than girls. Boys and girls make good progress from their different starting points.
- Parents speak highly of the progress their children make, recognising that some pupils have been able to sit GCSE examinations in mathematics and science a year earlier than predicted.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well, making progress towards level 2 in English and level 1 in mathematics. This is because of the individualised support that teachers provide.
- Pupils are assessed by teachers throughout the academic year with formal assessments and examinations set in the spring and summer terms. Pupils have the option of functional skills or GCSE routes, depending on when they joined the school. This ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to achieve recognised qualifications.
- Outcomes across the curriculum are good. Pupils' books show gains in their personal, social and health education, and a greater awareness of topical issues including radicalisation and e-safety. Pupils have also achieved well in child development, home economics and ICT.

School details

Unique reference number	142115
DfE registration number	330/6018
Inspection number	10012881

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mr Stewart Dance
Headteacher	Mr Stewart Dance
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,000
Telephone number	0121 4482565
Website	www.oscottacademy.co.uk
Email address	info@oscottacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department for Education and opened in May 2015. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- Oscott Academy is an independent school based in Erdington for pupils aged between 14 and 16 who are at risk of being or have been excluded from mainstream provision.
- The school does not use any alternative providers for education.
- Children are referred by the local authority, local schools and placement services. Pupils can join Oscott Academy at any point during the school year. The school has an agreement with Birmingham local authority to provide full-time education for these pupils. Contracts are agreed with individual schools and services within the local authority.

- The majority of pupils have identified social, emotional and mental health needs. Many have a history of poor attendance or of exclusion from their schools. Some have additional special educational needs and/or disabilities, such as difficulties with reading or moderate learning difficulties.
- The school has a particular focus on pastoral care and re-engaging pupils with learning. It aims to provide a 'safe environment in which pupils can learn, achieve and progress'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in English, mathematics, science, PSHE, art, and physical education in boys' and girls' classes.
- The inspector also examined pupils' work in books and reviewed the school's assessment information.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at the beginning and end of the school day, at lunchtime and breaktimes, and when pupils were moving about the school.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff and the headteacher.
- A discussion was held with the school improvement partner.
- At the end of the inspection, there were three responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and three free-text comments.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included: the school's self-evaluation document, assessment information and a range of policy statements. The records on behaviour, the admissions and attendance registers and safety and safeguarding documents were also scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, Lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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