

# The Ockendon Academy

Erriff Drive, South Ockendon, Essex RM15 5AY

## Inspection dates

9–10 October 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Inadequate</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Inadequate</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Good</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Until recently, leaders failed to grasp the reality of the school's weaknesses.
- Too little of the teaching enables pupils to make enough progress. Effective teaching is focused on Years 10 to 11, and in creative subjects and physical education but not in a sufficiently wide range of other subjects.
- English, mathematics and science are not taught well in Years 7 to 9. This leads to pupils being poorly prepared for GCSEs in these subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils have been poorly served by ineffective spending of the pupil premium. The pupils' outcomes are low. There has been some success in using the funding to retain pupils in school, but the money has not been used effectively to raise attainment.
- Outcomes are too low by the end of Year 11. For the last two years, pupils' progress between the end of key stage 2 and the end of key stage 4 has been in the bottom fifth of pupils nationally.

### The school has the following strengths

- New leadership this term has had a dramatically positive impact on morale. The new principal has rapidly put in place policies and procedures to improve the school.
- Pupils' welfare is central to the school work, and pastoral leaders show an unrelenting commitment to pupils' well-being.
- Pupils' personal development is a notable strength. Pupils are polite, mature and great ambassadors for the school.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is regular.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is in line with others nationally and improving further. Leaders ensure that students' progress is checked well.

## Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

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

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that all teaching staff, qualified or unqualified:
  - rapidly learn to promote pupils' progress through an understanding of their starting points and individual needs
  - are well trained in both the subject they are teaching and how best to teach it
  - are confident in the classroom and keep pupils engaged in their learning through challenging them.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by:
  - ensuring that pupils in all year groups gain subject knowledge and develop their understanding of concepts quickly
  - providing all pupils with regular opportunities to recall and apply knowledge
  - ensuring that teachers have clarity about the standards expected of pupils at different ages
  - ensuring robust support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
  - urgently reviewing the use and impact of pupil premium funding
  - urgently completing the current curriculum review to ensure that the curriculum is refined to meet the needs and aspirations of pupils.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- For too long, while properly maintaining the high standards of care for pupils' welfare, leadership failed to stem falling standards in the main school. One parent summed it up well by commenting, 'The atmosphere in school is great, but I would like to have strong results in teaching also.'
- The school is popular with parents and, as a result, is growing rapidly. However, leaders have found it difficult to recruit and retain sufficient, suitably qualified and specialist staff to deliver the curriculum effectively to so many pupils. The school has recruited unqualified teachers to train them in-house, which has not been sufficiently successful. Leaders are reviewing the effectiveness of how they train such large numbers of new staff.
- Professional training sessions are now focused on improving teaching and learning, and accelerating pupils' rates of progress. Observations to check the impact of this training had just begun at the beginning of the week of the inspection.
- Leaders admit that pupil premium funding is not used effectively. The only staff with knowledge of how money was spent last year have left. The lack of financial accountability for the effective use of additional funding includes the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, and special educational needs funding. Leaders rightly believe that an external review of the pupil premium is needed.
- The special educational needs coordinator is new in the role. Although there are strategies in place to match support to pupils' needs, leaders have not checked the impact. Teachers are unaware of whether they have pupils in their class who have SEN and/or disabilities and therefore do not adapt their teaching to meet their needs.
- Leaders recognise that the curriculum needs an urgent review. Leaders' intent in the current curriculum is unclear. For example, what the school calls the 'studio school' has no distinctive function. Pupils begin their GCSE programmes in Year 9, but weak teaching in some subjects does little to help pupils progress and so Year 9 is a wasted year.
- For pupils' care, well-being and personal development, leaders place a high value on external validation, support and challenge. The school holds the Inclusion Quality Mark Flagship Award, Equality Mark, Well-being Award, National Healthy Schools Status, Food for Life Silver Award and Investors in People.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum. Music and other artistic subjects are valued. The new course in place in Year 9 is well planned and complements other opportunities to understand and accept differences including cultural and religious differences.
- The new principal has 'hit the ground running'. She has an astute appreciation of what needs to be done. She has given leaders at all levels a clear sense of direction and empowered them to lead. As a result, leaders are quickly developing the necessary skills to lead effectively.

- Morale has improved strongly; for example, staff report that they were very dissatisfied with their workload, but 'The new principal is keen to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on staff.'

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors now have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The recently appointed chair of governors brings clarity and objectivity to the role based on relevant experience of school leadership.
- Governors are now challenging leaders and ensured a robust appointment process to select the current principal. They are clearly focused on rectifying the weaknesses they have identified but recognise that it is too soon to see the fruits of their new-found challenge.
- Governors have discharged their safeguarding responsibilities well, ensuring greater rigour in the administration of this aspect of the school's work.
- Governors visit the school regularly, carefully maintaining a strategic monitoring role. For example, governors have rightly been concerned that the school's pupil premium funding has not been used fully or effectively. They asked leaders for a more in-depth presentation and asked very challenging questions, rightly, about impact. The chair of governors in describing the support for disadvantaged pupils rightly concluded, 'It's not good.'

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All statutory requirements are met.
- The welfare of pupils is at the heart of the school and, as a result, there is a strong culture of safeguarding. Teachers understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Health and safety assessments are thorough. Relationships with external agencies are strong and effective. The well-being of the small number of pupils educated off-site is monitored appropriately.
- While the school is safe, and pupils' welfare is given the highest priority, the system could be improved further by increasing the number of designated safeguarding leads to reflect better the size of the school. The principal recognises that strengthening the robustness of systems against potential future gaps is a priority.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Inadequate**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too inconsistent.
- At key stage 3, pupils are making inadequate progress because teaching does not develop their knowledge, understanding and skills sufficiently. This is due to a high proportion of lessons being taught by the school's least effective teachers. Too often, unqualified or non-specialist teachers do not have the subject expertise to stretch pupils in their learning and ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils' commitment to learning in Years 7 to 9 is too low in several subjects.

- Teachers are not sufficiently aware of the knowledge and skills that pupils bring from their primary school education. As a result, expectations of what pupils can do are too low.
- The most experienced and suitably qualified teachers are focused in Years 10 to 13. The quality of teaching in the lower years is too inconsistent to enable pupils to make sufficient progress through Years 7 to 9. As a result, teachers in Years 10 to 11 must work speedily to catch up and plug gaps. This in turn restricts opportunities to enable pupils to develop skills needed for effective independent study in the sixth form.
- In all year groups, the teaching engages pupils well in learning in creative and active subjects such as art, technology and physical education.
- In some lessons, teachers use questioning well to develop and deepen pupils' understanding. Where questioning was well planned, targeted to specific pupils and probing, it led to increased levels of application and understanding, for example in Year 7 and 9 physical education. On the other hand, where pupils' misconceptions of subject knowledge were not recognised and supported by teachers, for example in Year 7 religious education, pupils could not apply their learning to the tasks and made limited progress over time.
- Learning support assistants are clearly responsive to pupils' needs and are well trained to support more vulnerable pupils' well-being as well as their learning. During the inspection, strategies used supported pupils' literacy well and enhanced pupils' learning in science, English and information technology.
- In Years 10 and 11, teaching is often effective and, as a result, over time pupils make good progress. In a Year 11 business lesson, for example, pupils had well-established routines looking back through their notes to recall and use knowledge in a starter activity. They assessed one another's answers against agreed criteria and responded positively to the teacher's questioning, which was used skilfully to deepen pupils' understanding. The teacher was highly successful at instilling a sense of urgency, and the pupils rose to the challenge.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pastoral leaders understand the local contexts of potential threats to pupils' welfare. They meet at the end of every day to consider pupils' welfare.
- Very nearly all parents responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that their child was happy and safe at school. Parents were generally effusive about this area of provision. For example, one parent told inspectors: 'An incident happened this morning on the way to school ... I was so impressed with the staff ... every teacher that drove past stopped to see if everything was OK. One of the teachers on the scene was fantastic, and then more staff arrived at the scene. I cannot recommend this school enough, I'm so glad my child chose here.'

- Tutor time and assemblies are used productively to promote fundamental British values and pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. These times are used to raise awareness about the potential risks around extremism. Racist incidents are very rare.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when online.
- After-school activities, particularly in sport, help pupils to stay healthy. For example, a parent commented: 'My son started this school in September and is extremely happy. He is involved in all the extra activities the school arranges, which he thoroughly enjoys. He now plays more sport than ever before!'
- Careers information and guidance build steadily from Year 7. Good progress is being made towards fully meeting the 'Gatsby benchmarks' for careers provision. The school ensures that pupils have plenty of information about their post-16 options, but pupils' choices are limited by their poor academic outcomes.
- Pupils are prepared well for aspects of adult life. For example, inspectors found pupils revising hard to improve their grades in London Institute for Banking Finance level 2 qualifications, ensuring structured and rigorous knowledge about personal finance and aspects of citizenship.
- The relatively large number of children looked after are exceptionally well supported and cared for pastorally. However, their academic attainment is low.
- Pupils are smart and wear their uniform with pride. They are hungry to learn, although too often that hunger is not fed.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is a very well-ordered community. In most lessons, at breaktimes, before and after school and between lessons, the school is a beacon of politeness and good behaviour. Pupils of different ages mix well together.
- The school has a sustained history of good behaviour resulting from clear and consistently enforced routines.
- In most lessons, pupils are cooperative and well behaved. Disruption to learning is rare and where it does occur is usually dealt with well by staff. In some instances, where teaching does not meet the needs and abilities of pupils, some teachers have been insufficiently well trained to maintain order, but more often, poor teaching is met with quiet disengagement.
- Attendance is at least at the national average, while persistent absence is below average. Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons. Exclusion rates are very low.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and parents overwhelmingly say that pupils are happy and safe.
- The new principal's policy of banning mobile phones during the school day has quickly been accepted by pupils, and the policy is being implemented consistently.
- Some pupils reported that they have been bullied, but that the school had dealt with it well.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Inadequate

- Pupils' progress between the end of key stages 2 and 4 dipped to well below the national average in 2017 and failed to recover in 2018. Before that, pupils' progress was either in line with or above average. In 2017, pupils' progress in both English and in mathematics was in the bottom fifth of schools nationally.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils' progress from their starting points was below that of other pupils nationally and was in the bottom fifth of pupils nationally in both English and mathematics. In 2018, the picture was very similar.
- Inspectors searched for evidence that the outcomes for current pupils were better than that suggested by the data. They concluded that, although new leadership has rapidly established new procedures to boost pupils' progress, it was too soon to see much impact.
- Due to effective teaching in Years 10 and 11, pupils are beginning to catch up with where they should be and there are signs of improvement in Year 11. Pupils currently make inadequate progress in Years 7 to 9 in English, mathematics and science. As a result, pupils are not well prepared for GCSE studies by the time they reach Year 10.
- Very nearly all pupils carry on in some form of education or training at the end of Year 11.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Good

- The quality of the sixth form continues to improve. Students' academic achievement is now in line with that of other students nationally. The average A-level score rose by a whole grade, from D to C from 2017 to 2018. Current assessment suggests that the Year 13 students are performing at a higher level than last year.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is good. Inspectors observed teaching in a wide range of subjects. Questioning is effective in deepening students' understanding.
- Professional relationships between teachers and students are very supportive in helping students to make progress. Feedback to students helps them to improve their work. Misconceptions are picked up and rectified by teachers. Teachers and students are enthusiastic in their learning.
- Students feel very well cared for. The small numbers in the sixth form mean that each student is well known to staff. A representative parent comment was: 'The academy went out of their way to help my daughter to join the sixth form, being helpful and considerate from the start ... already providing opportunities to visit universities at the start of Year 12; and the students are well resourced and taught in small groups by knowledgeable, approachable staff.'
- Leaders and managers in the sixth form have had more opportunities than in the main school to learn from the success of others. They cite a visit to an Essex school with a successful sixth form as providing the inspiration for much of the improvement that has taken place since the previous inspection. Much more than in the main school, there is an open culture of staff popping in and quality checks by leaders. Students' progress is checked regularly and carefully.

- Study programmes ensure that students are equipped for the world of higher education and work. Impartial careers guidance is valued by the students. Apprenticeships as an alternative to university are supported in seminars, assemblies and the enhanced curriculum. 'The Monday Programme' prepares students very well for their future challenges, with sessions on managing money and employability. Work placements have a high priority.
- Inspectors agree with leaders that 'Students conduct themselves with maturity and confidence because of this provision.'
- Students in Year 12 who completed key stage 4 within the school are not as ready for post-16 study as they might be, because teaching in Years 10 and 11 is focused on catching up and plugging gaps in learning from lower down the school, leaving little opportunity to develop skills of independent learning and discussion.



## School details

Unique reference number	136387
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10054125

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,176
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	89
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Richard Milligan
Principal	Jo Rainey
Telephone number	01708 851 661
Website	<a href="http://www.theockendonacademy.com">www.theockendonacademy.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@theockendonacademy.com">office@theockendonacademy.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2014

## Information about this school

- This is an above-average sized secondary school that has grown rapidly over recent years. In September 2013, students were admitted to the sixth form for the first time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be entitled to the pupil premium is above average.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students who have SEN and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of students with an education, health and care plan is well above average.

- A few pupils are educated in off-site alternative provision at Rally Sport Engineering Academy.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence from: 48 lesson observations, some carried out with senior leaders; short visits to lessons; discussions with pupils and staff; meetings with staff, the chair of the governing body and two other governors; reviews of pupils' work in books; reviews of the school's website, documents and assessment information; and general observations of the daily operations of the school, including social times.
- Inspectors analysed the 109 standard responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, alongside the 79 free-text responses to the same questionnaire. The inspection team received 75 pupil surveys and 81 questionnaires from staff.

## Inspection team

Adrian Lyons, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Carole Herman	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Ayling	Ofsted Inspector
Kay Leach	Ofsted Inspector
Phillip Barr	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](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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