

# The Oaks Academy

Buchan Grove, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 7NQ

## Inspection dates

12–13 December 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>Inadequate</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Inadequate</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- The school opened in January 2016, as part of the Crewe Multi Academy Trust. Leaders, including trustees, have failed to secure an acceptable standard of education at the school.
- Leaders at all levels, including trustees, do not demonstrate the capacity to secure the improvements required. They have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness. Improvement plans, and external support, lack the impact urgently required.
- Pupils' examination results in 2017 and 2018 were almost a grade lower than the average for pupils with similar starting points nationally.
- The progress of current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, is weak, including in English, mathematics and science.
- The implementation of the curriculum too often fails to secure pupils' effective learning.
- Leaders are not effective in managing the pupil premium funding or Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not taught well.
- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is weak. Too often, teachers fail to set work that matches pupils' needs. They do not take sufficient account of what pupils can already do or provide opportunities for them to build upon this with depth and fluency.
- Typically, pupils' literacy skills are weak. Pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to develop their oracy and writing. As a result, they struggle to make good progress.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' work. Too often pupils' work lacks care and precision.
- Too many pupils have poor attitudes to learning. They lose concentration, especially when the work they are set is too easy or too hard, leading to disruptive behaviour in lessons.
- Pupils' conduct around school varies. It is at its weakest between lessons. Exclusions from school due to poor behaviour are high.
- Pupils' attendance is poor and persistent absenteeism is currently increasing.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leadership of art and sport is good. Pupils learn effectively in these subjects.
- Pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC) plan are well supported.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils say that they are well cared for and safe at school. Their differences are valued.

## Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

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

- Ensure that leaders at all levels, including those of the Crewe Multi Academy Trust, have a far greater impact, by:
  - accurately self-evaluating the standard of education provided at the school
  - making sure that the actions urgently required to improve the school are effective, sharply focused on key priorities and monitored closely
  - making sure that trustees and others responsible for governance oversee the work of the school effectively
  - embedding an effective curriculum, so that pupils learn with depth and fluency across subjects and year groups
  - managing the pupil premium funding effectively, so that disadvantaged pupils attend school regularly and make progress in line with that of other pupils nationally
  - managing the Year 7 literacy and numeracy funding effectively to enable pupils to catch up quickly
  - providing effective teaching for pupils with SEND, so that they attain the outcomes of which they are capable.
- Urgently improve pupils' progress across all year groups and in a broad range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- Secure effective teaching, learning and assessment, by:
  - ensuring that assessment information is used by teachers in all year groups to set work that stretches pupils' thinking, knowledge and skills
  - insisting that teachers support pupils to raise their expectations and work with more care and precision
  - providing much-needed opportunities for pupils to attain the levels in oracy and writing of which they are capable, across a range of subjects.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
  - making sure that pupils' disruptive behaviour in lessons ceases
  - securing pupils' good conduct around the school, especially between lessons
  - taking effective action to reduce pupils' exclusions from school
  - significantly reducing pupils' absence from school so that they attend regularly.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to see how this aspect of

leadership and management can be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to see how this aspect of leadership and management can be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Leaders at all levels of the Crewe Multi Academy Trust have failed to provide an acceptable standard of education for pupils. Pupils' progress is stubbornly weak, their behaviour is inadequate and the quality of teaching is poor. Leaders have not demonstrated the capacity to make the significant improvements that are urgently required. There is little evidence to suggest that support provided and brokered by the trust's executive leaders is making a positive difference to overcoming the school's key weaknesses.
- Leaders at all levels have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness and the impact of their leadership. They vastly inflate the positive impact of actions they have taken to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in mathematics and a range of other subjects. For example, they cite mathematics as an area where support and training have led to strong teaching and pupils' good progress. This is not the case. In 2018, pupils attained almost a grade less than others with similar starting points nationally. Current pupils' progress is similarly weak because of poor teaching and leadership.
- Senior leaders intend the curriculum to meet pupils' interests and needs, and to develop the depth and fluency of their learning. They offer as wide a range of courses and opportunities as the school's finances allow. For example, the GCSE offer at key stage 4 has been extended to include photography, to meet the interests of pupils. However, too often, despite these efforts, the implementation of the curriculum is ineffective. For example, the key stage 3 curriculum does not routinely take account of the work covered by pupils in their primary schools. As a result, too much work set in Year 7 does not build on pupils' prior learning, so their progress is typically weak.
- Leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching at the school is overgenerous. They point to the support, training and reviews provided by external providers, contracted through the trust, as secure evidence of improved and good teaching. Leaders' self-evaluation at the time of the inspection failed to grasp the typicality of embedded weaknesses in teaching that result in pupils' poor learning. For example, pupils' literacy, including the standard of their oracy and writing, is of a low standard. This is the case for pupils with all starting points, because the curriculum provision and weak teaching do not provide them with opportunities to develop and refine these skills across a range of subjects. Although staff are positive about the training that they receive, it is not effective in securing the improvements urgently required, including in pupils' literacy.
- Leaders' use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is not effective. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is weak. They do not attain the standards of which they are capable across all year groups and do not attend school regularly enough. The view of leaders, that there is a momentum of improvement, is flawed. This is because they do not take enough account of how well this group of pupils perform compared to other pupils nationally.
- The management of support for pupils who have EHC plans is effective. School leaders monitor these pupils' progress and personal development closely. As a result, they typically make good academic progress. In contrast, the support provided for other

pupils with SEND is typically weak. Leaders are not effective in ensuring that teachers and other adults make use of the information provided to support and challenge this group effectively. As a result, too often these pupils lose focus and misbehave in lessons, and their progress is poor.

- The Year 7 catch-up funding is poorly managed. Far too many pupils who enter Year 7 with below-average levels of literacy and/or mathematics do not benefit from effective support. As a result, they fail to reach the school's average age-related standards by the end of the year. They continue to struggle in reading, writing and mathematics, which hinders their progress across the curriculum.
- Subject leadership has not been effective in securing pupils' good progress and positive attitudes to learning. There are exceptions, such as art and sport, where strong leadership insists upon high expectations and inspires pupils to learn confidently and consistently. However, across most other subjects, leaders have not been effective in ensuring that pupils are set challenging enough work, pupils with SEND are supported effectively, and pupils' outcomes improve.
- Leaders plan pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development thoughtfully. Their actions to strengthen these aspects of the curriculum have had a positive impact overall. Pupils think about a wide range of issues, such as prejudice, globalisation and empire, across the subjects that they study. Despite many pupils struggling to attain the levels of which they are capable in their learning overall, they typically consider these aspects with empathy. The pupils with whom inspectors spoke said that they understand and value people's differences, faiths and cultures.
- Leaders plan a range of extra-curricular activities for pupils that cater for and develop pupils' wider academic, cultural, artistic and sporting interests. Those pupils who attend these activities speak positively of their impact.
- It is strongly recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors and trustees have not been effective in securing an acceptable standard of education at the school and they do not demonstrate the capacity to do so. They do not hold an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Their view of the impact of the actions that they have taken to improve pupils' outcomes, the quality of teaching and leadership are overgenerous. As a result, governance is ineffective.
- Governance is being restructured. Trustees intend to strengthen governance with additional capacity and expertise to increase the challenge that they provide to senior leaders. However, these changes have not improved the impact of governors' work to this point.
- Between the school's opening in January 2016 and December 2017, the school's sponsor and trustees contracted a third party to support the effectiveness of the school's leadership, quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Since that time, other support has come from external providers. These contracts or other support from the school's sponsor have not been successful in securing convincing or sustained improvement.
- Governors have restructured the workforce since the school opened in January 2016.

The number of pupils on roll has fallen significantly over that time, which has resulted in financial constraints. Steps taken by governors to recruit and retain staff over that period, especially teachers, have been effective.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders maintain effective safeguarding records. They systematically check the backgrounds of staff when they are appointed.
- Checks made by inspectors found that staff, including non-teaching staff, are trained in identifying potential risks to pupils.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe, including when online. They know to whom they should report concerns and how to do this.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school and that staff provide for their safety effectively.
- Leaders work effectively with external agencies, parents and carers. They act swiftly when required to secure pupils' safety and well-being. Referrals are made to external agencies as appropriate.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Inadequate

- The quality of teaching is weak across year groups and in too many subjects. Trustees and other leaders have failed to tackle weaknesses in teaching.
- The weak quality of teaching has led to pupils' poor progress over time. The pockets of effective teaching, such as in art and sport, are too few. Typically, teaching does not provide pupils with the opportunities to attain the levels of which they are capable, including in English, mathematics and science.
- Disadvantaged pupils and most of those with SEND are not taught effectively. Leaders expect teachers to take steps to support and challenge these pupils, but these are rarely implemented effectively. Typically, pupils with SEND do not learn well because teaching lacks the structure or challenge that they require. In these cases, pupils often lose concentration or resort to disruptive behaviour. However, pupils with an EHC plan typically learn well because staff know them well and meet their needs.
- Teachers do not use the assessment information available about pupils' learning, including for those pupils who join in Year 7, effectively to set work which matches their needs. As a result, pupils of almost all abilities make weak progress. The most able suffer because, too often, the work set lacks challenge. They are not provided with opportunities to think about and explore topics with depth and detail frequently enough. Therefore, when they are expected to produce work at a level commensurate with their ability they often struggle. In some cases, where there are examples of stronger teaching within subjects, middle-ability pupils are producing better-quality work than the most able pupils in other classes.
- Pupils across the school demonstrate a weak and underconfident grasp of literacy. This includes many of the pupils who left Year 6 working at the expected or higher standards in reading and writing. Leaders' actions to remedy pupils' reticence to write

at length have been successful in some cases, such as in sport. Here, pupils write with confidence, and with growing accuracy and fluency. However, more typically pupils' attainment is held back by their lack of progress in developing their writing skills across a range of subjects. Pupils' misconceptions in spelling, punctuation and grammar are too rarely or successfully addressed. Too few pupils in all year groups write at a good standard.

- Teachers rarely provide opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding or practise and develop their speaking skills. The questions posed by most teachers require only brief and basic answers from pupils. Occasionally, pupils do have the time to think about and refine their responses. In these cases, such as in art, pupils grapple with ideas and speak with fluency.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Inadequate

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Many of the pupils with whom inspectors spoke were polite, courteous and considerate of others. These pupils were articulate, confident, took pride in their appearance and welcomed the opportunity to share their positive views and experiences of the school. Others were less skilled or uncomplimentary when talking about the school and did not wear their uniform correctly.
- Many pupils enjoy positive interactions with one another and with adults. The pupils with whom inspectors spoke agreed that when bullying, such as a physical risk, prejudicial behaviour or name-calling, is reported it is dealt with quickly and effectively. However, some pupils were uncertain if other cases were dealt with so consistently. Further checks made by inspectors showed that most parents are satisfied that bullying is not commonplace and that where incidents are reported, they are followed up and resolved effectively.
- Pupils are clear that they are cared for and valued as individuals. They are safe and supported to be who they want to be. The pupils with whom inspectors spoke were very clear that people's differences in and out of school are respected and valued.
- Leaders and other staff are considerate of pupils' mental and physical well-being. The school's curriculum, canteen staff and support services are effective in raising their awareness of potential risks to their well-being.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Too often pupils' behaviour in lessons is inappropriate. This is especially the case where teachers do not set work at the level which matches pupils' needs or where teachers' expectations are low. In these cases, pupils habitually lose concentration and disrupt their own learning and the learning of others. Sometimes this low-level misbehaviour escalates into more serious disruption and poor conduct. Teachers are

often ineffective in remedying these weaknesses. However, in those areas where teachers have high expectations and set work which interests pupils and stretches their thinking, pupils focus and try hard.

- Pupils' conduct around the school is variable. Staff generally support pupils effectively to behave at breaktime and lunchtime in the dining hall and playground. However, some pupils misbehave or are boisterous around school, including at the change of lessons. Sometimes these pupils are late for lessons and staff do not consistently challenge their conduct.
- Too few pupils attend school regularly. Levels of absence, including those of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, have increased this year. This is especially the case in the current Year 9 and Year 11, where around a quarter of pupils are persistently absent. Checks made during the inspection showed that about one fifth of the pupils on the school roll were absent at that time. Weak attendance is compounded by high rates of exclusion for poor behaviour.
- Leaders routinely check the attendance, behaviour and safeguarding of pupils who attend alternative provision.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Inadequate

- Pupils make weak progress. They have performed poorly in GCSE examinations since the school opened. Pupils attained around a grade lower in each of their GCSE examinations than all pupils nationally with similar starting points in 2017 and 2018.
- Too many pupils are making weak progress. This is the case across year groups, including Year 11, and across a wide range of subjects. There are a small number of subjects where pupils regularly make good progress, including art and sport. There are some instances where pupils learn effectively in English and mathematics, but these are infrequent. Overall, pupils' progress in English and mathematics is weak.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Their examination results have been poor since the school opened, typically a grade below those of others with similar starting points nationally. Too often their work lacks accuracy, depth of understanding and fluency. This is due to weak teaching compounded by leaders' ineffective use of pupil premium funding.
- Most pupils with SEND make weak progress. Leaders are not effective in securing effective teaching and support for these pupils. However, pupils with an EHC plan typically make good progress. Leaders are effective in ensuring that staff know and support these pupils well.
- Too often, the most able pupils are not provided with opportunities to learn with depth and fluency, and this limits their progress. Middle-ability pupils typically make similarly weak progress. Teachers do not routinely insist upon accuracy and care in these pupils' work, hence they do not attain the standards of which they are capable. Pupils with low starting points are not effectively supported. The work that they are set is either too easy or too hard for them. As a result, they often lose concentration and engage in low-level disruption, which contributes to their poor progress.
- Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are poor. Too many teachers have low expectations of the quality of pupils' work. As a result, pupils are careless about the



accuracy and precision of their work. At times, they do not complete it.

- Leaders have focused with some success on increasing the number of pupils who move on to next steps in education and employment with training. Most pupils now move on to courses once they leave the school, including at the local college which sponsors the school. However, pupils' weak examination results limit their opportunities to follow courses at the level of which they are capable. Around two thirds of the pupils who left the school in 2018 did not attain a standard pass in English and mathematics.

## School details

Unique reference number	142472
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10053495

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	393
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Fintan Bradley
Headteacher	Emma Hooley
Telephone number	01270 661223
Website	<a href="http://www.theoaksacademy.co.uk">www.theoaksacademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@theoaksacademy.co.uk">admin@theoaksacademy.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The Oaks Academy opened in January 2016. It was the first and, to date, only school to join the Crewe Multi Academy Trust, which is sponsored by Cheshire College – South and West. Governance is delivered through a board of trustees and a local governing body. The board of trustees holds the statutory governance functions.
- The Oaks Academy is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school. The number of pupils on the school's roll has decreased over time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The proportion of girls at the school is above the national average.
- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at Changing Education.

## Information about this inspection

- Meetings took place with school leaders, teachers, the chair of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Crewe Multi Academy Trust.
- Discussions were held with pupils to gather their views on a variety of issues, including safeguarding, bullying, behaviour, teaching and the curriculum.
- Inspectors examined a range of the school's documentation, such as the self-evaluation and improvement plan, assessment information, the pupil premium plan, attendance and behaviour records and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of 36 staff survey responses, 13 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and eight written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school and scrutinised pupils' work in a range of subjects and year groups. They were accompanied by school leaders on some of these observations.

## Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sheldon Logue	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Cave	Ofsted Inspector

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