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27 March 2019

Mr Gavin Swinscoe  
Principal  
Outwood Academy Portland  
Netherton Road  
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Nottinghamshire  
S80 2SF

Dear Mr Swinscoe

### **No formal designation inspection of Outwood Academy Portland**

Following my visit with Deborah Mosley, Her Majesty's Inspector, Peter Monk, Ofsted Inspector, and Julie Sheppard, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 6 March 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the high levels of pupil exclusions in the school and exceptional pupil movements at times other than the end of a phase of education. These relate to aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management (including governance), and aspects of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare at the school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors met with a range of senior leaders, including those responsible for behaviour, inclusion, attendance, safeguarding, pupil premium funding and the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The lead inspector met with trust representatives, including the chief executive officer, the chief executive principal (secondary) and the executive principal, as well as two representatives of the academy council, including the chair. Inspectors met with learning managers, a group of teachers and teachers who have recently joined the profession.

Inspectors reviewed the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. They

looked at a range of documents, including records relating to pupils' behaviour and exclusions, pupils leaving the school, and attendance. They considered information about alternative providers of education used by the school. The lead inspector also checked the school's single central record and the school's system for recruiting staff.

Inspectors visited 18 lessons from a range of subjects across key stages 3 and 4. They met formally with groups of pupils and spoke with pupils in lessons and informally around school.

## **Context**

The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The number of pupils on roll is increasing, and the school experiences high levels of pupil movement. The school is situated in an area of above-average deprivation. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than average. The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A minority of pupils speak English as an additional language.

The current principal has been in post since September 2018, having been the associate principal since November 2016. The principal at the time of the previous inspection is now the executive principal. A new inclusion coordinator was appointed in September 2018. This leader is also responsible for safeguarding. A new leader for the provision of pupils with SEND was also appointed in September 2018. This post is shared with another school in the trust.

The school has been part of the Outwood Grange Academies Trust since June 2012. Governance is provided by the board of trustees and a local academy council. The school currently uses the following alternative providers: Alternative Programme Education; Teaching Personnel; and First Class Tailored Solutions.

## **Main findings**

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have an uncompromising focus on creating a culture of high expectations among pupils and staff. All staff and those responsible for governance understand the part they play in supporting pupils and helping them to be successful.

Since September 2016, the school has experienced an exceptional amount of pupil movement at times other than at the end of a phase of education. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, track pupil mobility carefully each week. Pupils are only taken off roll once their destination has been confirmed. On occasion, leaders arrange for pupils to move to another school, sometimes in the trust, as part of a managed move to continue their education. These arrangements are not always successful, leading to some pupils returning to this school.

In some instances, parents and carers express a wish to educate their children at home. When this is the case, leaders discuss with parents what more can be done to meet their children's needs and aspirations in the school. For example, leaders may alter a pupil's timetable or provide the pupil with additional support, including from external agencies. As a result, some parents then decide to leave their children on the school's roll.

When parents choose to remove their children from the school to educate them at home, leaders inform the local authority to make its officers aware. Leaders know that some of these pupils subsequently register with another local provider to continue their education. Leaders track each pupil who leaves closely to ensure that none go missing from education. Inspectors found no evidence to suggest that leaders encourage parents to electively home educate their children

There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school and in lessons, with leaders having a highly visible presence throughout the day. Pupils are polite, respectful and courteous to others, including visitors. They forge supportive relationships with their peers and appreciate the support provided by their teachers, particularly through the enrichment programme after school. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning.

The school's behaviour policy is detailed and precise. Recent changes to the policy have led to improvements in pupils' behaviour. Staff, including teachers who are new to the profession, are supported well in managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils know what is expected of them. They recognise that their choices and actions lead to consequences. Pupils are provided with opportunities to rectify their behaviour. Most pupils who spoke with inspectors said the pupils' behaviour had improved and was generally good. While some of these pupils felt the behaviour policy was too strict, most said they were happy at the school. As one pupil stated: 'It is easy to meet the expectations if you want to.' However, some pupils felt that a small number of teachers did not apply the policy consistently or fairly.

Learning managers know the pupils they are responsible for well. Both 'The Bridge' and the 'Personalised Learning Centre' are used effectively by leaders to offer pupils individualised programmes of support. Leaders employ a range of strategies to meet the social, emotional and learning needs of pupils at risk of being internally isolated or excluded. A notable, though decreasing, proportion of pupils spend time in the 'consequences' room, due to unresolved or more serious behaviour incidents. However, this sanction is not always effective. Pupils in the 'consequences' room are not always provided with appropriate learning activities. Some pupils said the sanction did not help them to change their behaviour.

The proportions of pupils excluded once or repeatedly from school are much higher than national averages. Too many disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and boys are excluded. Leaders have taken decisive action to reduce exclusions. Current information indicates marked improvements for some, but not all pupils, across

almost all year groups. Leaders provide all pupils who are excluded with appropriate work to complete while away from the school. Many of these pupils reintegrate successfully into the school, with appropriate support. However, a small number of pupils still receive too many repeat exclusions. Some of these pupils say they are not helped sufficiently well to modify their behaviour. Too often, these pupils are disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND or boys.

According to the school's information, the proportion of pupils with SEND who are excluded from the school is reducing. The attendance of these pupils is improving. However, in both cases, there are still gaps between the figures for pupils with SEND and their peers nationally. Leaders responsible for pupils with SEND do not monitor this information explicitly for these pupils. Leaders are currently reviewing systems to identify pupils with SEND, particularly younger pupils, to ensure that the needs of these pupils are being met precisely.

Leaders only exclude pupils permanently from school after they have exhausted a range of different options. For instance, a small number of pupils receive their education through alternative providers. In exceptional circumstances, leaders plan part-time timetables for pupils attending alternative provision. Leaders communicate effectively with providers to ensure that these pupils are safe and that their welfare needs are met. Alternatively, leaders may offer a pupil a place at another school in the trust. When pupils are permanently excluded from the school, leaders follow the correct procedures and inform the appropriate authorities.

The proportion of pupils who secure sustained education, employment or training at the end of Year 11 is slightly below the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders provide pupils with a varied diet of careers education, and all pupils can access independent advice and guidance. Most pupils who had been repeatedly excluded who spoke with an inspector had clear aspirations for their future.

The last inspection identified the need to improve pupils' attendance. Leaders have established rigorous systems to track and record pupils' attendance. They intervene swiftly if they are concerned about an individual pupil. Attendance has improved and is slightly above the national average. Leaders' actions have also reduced the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent to below the national average. This is partly due to a fall in the number of exclusions. While the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is not as high as that of other pupils, it has also improved. Very few pupils arrive late at the school.

Pupils feel safe in the school. They say they have an adult in the school who they trust and can talk with. Pupils learn how to stay safe through a comprehensive 'life' curriculum, which includes the dangers of drugs and alcohol, sex education, education on knife crime and how to stay safe online. They are also taught about the importance of good behaviour out in the community.

Staff are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. They can recognise signs of neglect or abuse and understand the need to make a timely referral when necessary. Teachers talk knowledgeably about the local risks that pupils may face and value their role as tutors to help pupils who require close support.

Leaders responsible for safeguarding receive up-to-date training and carry out their roles diligently. They complete all the appropriate checks before any adult starts working or volunteering at the school. Leaders ensure that the most vulnerable pupils receive appropriate support, working closely with external agencies and the local police. All members of the academy council, who are part of the school's governance, have completed safeguarding training, including in relation to county lines, radicalisation and extremism.

### **External support**

Members of the academy council are fully involved in the work of the school. They are fully aware of the school's behaviour strategies and support leaders through, for example, convening a behaviour panel to discuss an individual pupil's behaviour.

Leaders update trust representatives weekly with information relating to pupils' behaviour, exclusions and any movement of pupils on the school's roll. This ensures that school leaders are held closely to account by those responsible for governance, while also allowing school leaders to receive close support from the trust to bring about improvements. Trust leaders continue to review the behaviour policy, with a priority of reducing the occurrence of pupils being excluded from the school.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Continue to reduce the proportion of pupils who are excluded and repeatedly excluded from school.
- Ensure that pupils with SEND are identified accurately and as early as possible, so that their needs are met fully in all aspects of school life.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Outwood Grange Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Tordoff

**Her Majesty's Inspector**