

Inspection of The Oak Tree Academy

Newham Grange Avenue, Stockton-on-Tees TS19 0SE

Inspection dates: 25–26 September 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The Oak Tree Academy has improved a lot since it was last inspected. Leaders and teachers provide a safe environment, with clear rules and expectations. Because of this, most pupils behave well and are sensible. Everyone in the school thinks behaviour has got a lot better. On occasion, a few pupils misbehave or lose interest in lessons. Pupils are learning that this is not acceptable. If they do misbehave, they feel the staff treat them fairly. This means that the school is calm and orderly throughout the day. Pupils and staff get along well and are polite towards one another.

There used to be some bullying, but it rarely happens now. Pupils know that the staff will not tolerate it. On the rare occasions that bullying does happen, staff take swift action and stop it from spreading.

The school provides a well-considered curriculum. Pupils make strong progress, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards of attainment and the level of attendance have risen in recent years.

There is lots to do at social times and after school. Teachers provide extra sessions to help pupils catch up. These sessions are very popular. Pupils also enjoy the gardening club and the many sports activities. They really enjoy singing in the school choir.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

School leaders and experts within the trust have improved the school. Most of the curriculum is now well planned. The curriculum in English and mathematics is a strength. In these subjects, knowledge is sequenced so that pupils' understanding builds steadily. In English, teachers bring topics to life using interesting and thought-provoking books. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are taught really well. Outcomes in national assessments at the end of key stage 2 have improved. However, this has been achieved, in part, by pupils spending less time studying subjects such as science or geography in Year 6. This undermines their readiness to study these subjects at secondary school.

Leaders make sure that reading is taught well. In the early years, children are taught phonics from the start. Teachers follow a systematic programme and frequently check children's progress. Most children quickly grasp the sounds that letters make. Teachers read stories and use singing and rhymes to bring books to life. They provide books that match the sounds children have learned. Teachers encourage parents to get involved and read with their children at home. The teachers and teaching assistants are well trained. They listen to younger children read every day and guide them skilfully. Children who find reading harder get lots of extra help. By the end of key stage 1, almost all pupils have a secure grasp of

phonics.

In some subjects, the curriculum is not yet sufficiently coherently planned. For example, in art, activities are not well connected. Activities chosen link to the term's topic. For example, in art, Year 3 pupils make cave paintings when studying the Stone Age. However, drawing and painting skills are not sequenced well or practised enough. By the end of key stage 2, too many pupils are not proficient in using different media, and they lack confidence in the subject. Leaders know this. It is clear from the actions that leaders are taking that they are improving curriculum planning in these subjects.

Leaders ensure that there is a good climate for learning across the school. The staff say behaviour is transformed. Classrooms are calm and purposeful and teaching is rarely interrupted. If pupils do lapse, staff talk to them and help them learn from their mistakes.

The school provides a wide range of enriching activities. There are lots of visits to places of interest, such as the seaside, places of worship and different museums. The school's 'Bright Futures' week introduces pupils to possible careers and to people with different jobs. Older pupils have responsibilities which they take seriously. Pupils are developing positive attitudes and a well-rounded appreciation of life in modern Britain.

The early years is a busy and exciting part of the school. Here, the curriculum is very well planned. Teachers know exactly what the children need. Children quickly learn new routines. Lively teaching ensures that children become curious and captivated. Most children make good progress. Skilled adults teach reading, writing and number skills effectively. They also ensure that children learn to clean their teeth and wash their hands. There are lots of opportunities for parents and carers to get involved.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Regular training and reminders ensure that all members of staff are vigilant for any signs that pupils may be at risk. Staff report any concerns immediately. This ensures that leaders have a detailed picture of the school's more vulnerable pupils. Leaders work closely with parents, social care and the police to protect children at risk. They keep detailed records and review their actions regularly. Leaders also make sure that adults who work in or visit the school are carefully vetted. There are good arrangements in place to supervise pupils at social times. Steps have been taken this term to make the school site more secure.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of education is not as strong in some of the foundation subjects as it is in reading, writing and mathematics. In subjects such as art and design and technology, the planned curriculum tends to consist of disconnected activities. Although these activities link to the term's overarching topic effectively, they do not support progress within the subject itself. Within these activities, planning does not make clear what pupils should know and be able to do by the end (the curricular goal). It is also not clear what activities pupils need to undertake and practise to achieve this goal. The school should review curriculum planning in art and design and technology to ensure that activities are more thoughtfully sequenced and that curricular goals are clearly identified. Leaders should also ensure that pupils get enough practice and become more proficient in using materials to achieve the curricular goals.
- Currently, leaders prioritise the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6, to ensure that pupils do as well as possible in national assessments. This means that pupils receive less teaching in other subjects during the year. In some subjects, not all of the key stage 2 national curriculum content is covered. The approach detracts from the quality of education as a whole. Leaders should adjust how the curriculum is implemented so that pupils make steady incremental progress in each of the national curriculum subjects across Years 3–6.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	139959
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10110591
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	330
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Tony Birch
Principal	Elizabeth Pollitt
Website	www.theoaktreeacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	23–24 May 2017

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes to the membership of the local academy council, including the appointment of a new chair. The local academy council has limited powers delegated to it by the Northern Education Trust Board.
- The school's last section 5 inspection took place in May 2017. The school received a monitoring inspection in February 2019.
- The school does not place any pupils in alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors met with the principal, executive principal, the director of learning and other leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator.
- An inspector also met with the deputy chief executive officer of the Northern Education Trust.
- An inspector spoke to a trustee on the telephone and met with three members of

the local academy council.

- Inspectors focused on the quality of the curriculum in reading, writing, science, history and art. Inspectors met with the curriculum leaders for each subject, visited lessons, talked to pupils, scrutinised a sample of books and held discussions with subject teachers.
- Inspectors also visited lessons and scrutinised curriculum planning in other subjects. Inspectors attended an assembly and a Viking workshop run by an external provider. They looked at a range of other information about behaviour, attendance, extra-curricular activities and wider enrichment events.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' punctuality, behaviour and conduct across the school day. During these times, they held informal discussions with pupils. Inspectors also spoke to different members of staff, including teaching assistants, the office manager, a cleaning supervisor and a recently qualified teacher, to gauge their views about how well pupils behave and conduct themselves.
- An inspector met with some pupils who have received sanctions in the past.
- Inspectors scrutinised the checks the school makes on adults who work in the school. An inspector talked to the principal and the welfare and attendance officer about safeguarding arrangements. The inspector looked at records of the actions they have taken to protect pupils at risk. Inspectors spoke to pupils to gauge how safe they felt and to what extent they know how to keep themselves safe. Inspectors also checked whether members of staff understand and abide by the school's safeguarding policy.

Inspection team

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