

Inspection of The Oxford Academy

Sandy Lane West, Littlemore, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX4 6JZ

Inspection dates: 26–27 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not get a good deal at this school. The behaviour of a growing minority of pupils has become unruly, unkind and unsafe. Bullying is not dealt with well enough. Many pupils rightly told us that they feel very worried about coming to the school. There is not enough support for pupils' personal development and well-being. Serious safeguarding concerns have not been acted on promptly enough.

Pupils are finding this year a challenge. Because there have been many staff changes, some pupils feel they have lost the trusted adults that they can talk to when they have concerns. Too many pupils do not have enough respect for each other or their teachers. Leaders and staff have not been effective in managing pupils' behaviour and it has quickly got worse.

Although many pupils want to work hard in lessons and achieve well, they find this difficult. Sometimes this is because of other pupils' poor behaviour, and sometimes it is because the subject is not taught well enough. Over time, pupils do not achieve enough in a wide range of subjects. Pupils' examination results are much lower than those of other pupils nationally and are declining.

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

Governors have failed to ensure that leaders do the right things for the right reasons. They have had an inaccurate view of crucial aspects of the school, including pupils' attendance, exclusion rates and behaviour. New governors have sought to tackle these issues recently. However, serious problems remain. Pupils are excluded from the school too frequently, and pupils' behaviour has deteriorated significantly. Most importantly, safeguarding is ineffective.

Leaders are hugely overstretched. Many are inexperienced in their roles. Not enough priority has been given to the leadership of safeguarding and pupils' well-being. Leaders lack a precise understanding of the serious scale and nature of behaviour incidents. Important signs that pupils need help have been missed, because of a lack of communication. Very recently, leaders have been bolstered by external support. However, it is too soon to see the difference this is making.

Frequent behaviour incidents, in class and out, disrupt daily life. Many pupils are scared to use communal areas. Incidents of violence and abuse, including fights between pupils, are increasing. Many pupils use homophobic language. Leaders have failed to deal with the situation. The behaviour policy is not effective, and staff do not implement it consistently. Sometimes, low-level behaviour escalates to become much more serious. Several staff told us that they feel unsafe. They are frustrated and disheartened, because leaders do not support them effectively.

There are gaps in pupils' learning. This is often because pupils are not attending regularly enough, or because lessons are disrupted by behaviour issues. There are gaps in curriculum planning and teachers' subject knowledge. Some pupils' literacy

skills are weak. The two-year key stage 3 is not preparing pupils well enough to study at GCSE in some subjects. The proportion of pupils that have taken the English Baccalaureate in recent years is well below the national average but is currently rising.

Senior leaders recognise some weaknesses in the curriculum. They are in the very early stages of addressing them. Many subject leaders have started to review the curriculum so that pupils are taught new knowledge in a logical order. However, their plans are unproven and have yet to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is weak. They do not get the right support, so their achievement suffers. Leaders have introduced new approaches to identify pupils' needs more accurately. It is too early to see any differences this is making. Other vulnerable pupils, including many children looked after and disadvantaged pupils, also achieve far less than they should.

Provision to support pupils' personal development is ineffective. Leaders' actions to address this are inconsistent. Early work to improve personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education has had little impact on pupils' safety or well-being. Support for pupils' mental health is weak. There are few wider opportunities to enrich pupils' education. A negative culture in the school is not helping to strengthen pupils' characters. Pupils are not prepared well enough for life in modern Britain.

The curriculum and behaviour in the sixth form are better. Students value the careers advice and guidance they receive. However, students do not attend the school regularly enough. Opportunities for their personal development are limited. For example, students have had little teaching about sexual and mental health. Some students' outcomes are too low, preventing them from achieving their aspirations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There is a poor culture of vigilance. Until very recently, leaders have not acted on the large number of serious concerns about pupils' safety. They have missed signs which show that pupils are at risk. Leaders have failed to understand the scale of some issues. There are not enough trained leaders to deal with the volume of concerns. Record-keeping is weak. Although staff have had regular safeguarding training and report concerns, issues go unnoticed.

Leaders have not referred cases to external agencies when they should have, potentially placing pupils at risk. These referrals are now being made. Leaders have been slow to act when these agencies raise concerns about the school's practices and procedures. Leaders cannot be sure of the safety or whereabouts of some pupils, including those in alternative provision. Leaders complete appropriate recruitment checks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Senior leaders and governors have not ensured that pupils are safe. Leaders need to urgently review safeguarding procedures and practice. They should: make sure there are enough trained leaders to deal with the large volume of concerns; ensure that staff know how to report concerns accurately and how to check these are acted on; establish secure systems for leaders to communicate regularly with each other about pupils' well-being and safety; keep records up to date and accurate; and refer any concerns to other agencies swiftly and appropriately. Pupils should be taught about how to stay safe in the school, in their community and online. Relationships between pupils and staff must improve, so that pupils feel able to tell trusted adults in the school if they feel unsafe or have any concerns.
- Behaviour management policy and practices are not working. Pupils' behaviour is very poor and deteriorating. Leaders should urgently ensure that: behaviour management strategies are fit for purpose and used effectively; staff consistently report behaviour incidents; bullying is dealt with promptly; staff are supported to manage pupils' behaviour confidently and effectively; and positive, warm, professional relationships develop between staff and pupils, and between pupils.
- Some leaders oversee too many different aspects of the school. Governors need to make sure that senior leaders have the capacity, training and time needed to do their work effectively.
- Pupils' attendance is too low, including in the sixth form. Persistent absence is too high. Leaders need to establish secure processes to analyse the reasons for pupils' absence and support pupils and their families in improving attendance.
- Provision for pupils' personal development is weak. New plans are not wide-ranging enough or being implemented effectively. Leaders need to make improvements quickly, particularly to support pupils' mental health, including in the sixth form.
- Communication between senior leaders and others, including staff, governors, and outside agencies, has been poor. Senior leaders should implement secure systems for them to listen to and respond to concerns raised by stakeholders. Governors need to: check more carefully that they are being provided with accurate and pertinent information about the school; ensure that they are checking the impact of the school's work more closely; and act more quickly when they discover weaknesses in practice.
- Provision for disadvantaged pupils, children looked after and pupils who have SEND is weak. Leaders and governors should make sure that: pupils' needs are identified accurately; and teachers know who these pupils are and use effective strategies to support them to meet their academic and personal development needs.
- Recent changes to improve the curriculum are not well established. Some

subjects are not planned and sequenced well enough. Some teachers lack the necessary subject-specific expertise. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum meets the ambition of the national curriculum and is implemented effectively, so that pupils catch up quickly and achieve more highly.

- It is recommended that the school does not appoint any newly qualified teachers.

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	135675
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10131140
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1068
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body.
Chair of governing body	Roy Leach
Headteacher	Andrew Hardy
Website	http://www.theoxfordacademy.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	28–29 September 2016

Information about this school

- The school is an academy that is not part of a multi-academy trust. The governors act as trustees and directors of The Oxford Academy Trust, which oversees the work of the school. The school is sponsored by the Diocese of Oxford, Oxford Brookes University and The Beecroft Trust. There are plans in place for the school to join a local multi-academy trust in the spring of 2020.
- Since the last inspection, there has been significant changes to both the staff and the governing body, with a high proportion of staff leaving and joining the school. The previous headteacher became part time in January 2018. He was joined by an interim co-headteacher from January to August 2018. The co-headteachers left the school in August 2018. The current headteacher took up his permanent post in September 2018. A new chair of governors was appointed in September 2018. The senior leadership team has since been restructured. Several leaders began their new roles in September 2019.
- The school's designated religious character is Church of England. The school was

inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in July 2016.

- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils, including Meadowbrook College and TRAX Oxfordshire motor project.
- More than half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is almost double the national average.
- Approximately one quarter of pupils are pupils who have SEND. This is well above the national average.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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.

- We carried out the inspection following a complaint made to Ofsted that raised serious concerns. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. We sought to establish whether there was a culture of safeguarding in the school.
- We met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- We met with three representatives from the local authority children, education and families department, to discuss pupils' behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. An inspector spoke on the telephone to the virtual headteacher about the school's provision for children looked after.
- The lead inspector met with a representative from the Diocese of Oxford and spoke with the deputy director of education.
- To inspect safeguarding, we spoke to a wide range of pupils and staff. We asked pupils about how they keep themselves safe and what to do if they have concerns. We spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe. We spoke to external agencies about their views of the school's safeguarding work. We considered the effectiveness of the school's referral and record-keeping processes.
- We observed pupils moving between lessons, at breaktime and at lunchtime. We spoke to pupils informally in lessons and around the school. We also met formally with three groups of pupils. We considered the 10 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- We met with several members of staff, including formally with a group of teachers and individually during 'drop in' sessions. We considered the 89 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

- We took account of the 34 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey.
- We scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance and safety.
- In considering the quality of education, we did deep dives in these subjects: English, history, information technology, science, and PSHE education. We discussed the arrangements for the curriculum and teaching with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders and teachers. We visited lessons and talked with pupils about what they had been learning. We looked at pupils' work in these subjects.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maxine McDonald-Taylor	Her Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Haynes	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Burridge	Ofsted Inspector

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