

Inspection of a good school: Oreston Community Academy

Oreston Road, Plymstock, Plymouth, Devon PL9 7JY

Inspection dates:

28–29 January 2020

Outcome

Oreston Community Academy continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like this school. The high level of care, including the work of the educational psychologist and the emotional literacy support assistants, helps to support pupils well. A trained counsellor helps pupils with their social, emotional and mental health needs.

Leaders are determined to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), get the best education possible. Most staff share these high expectations.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. There is very little poor behaviour, including bullying, recorded by the school. Most of the pupils I spoke to said that they feel safe in school and do not worry about being bullied. However, this view is not shared by a few parents and carers.

The school's ethos supports pupils to behave well and make healthy choices. For example, some pupils are 'food critics'. They help to shape meal choices for the school lunch menu. Teachers provide many rich experiences that extend beyond the classroom. Recently, some pupils have started work on making Oreston a plastic-free school. This is just one of many examples. Pupils learn about British values through the work of the school council and assemblies.

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

Since the previous inspection, there have been many changes to the leadership of the school. This has had a destabilising effect and led to a decline in standards. For example, in 2019, pupils' progress was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. However, current leaders, together with support from the governing body, are taking appropriate action to address identified priorities. The headteacher is beginning to make a difference, but it is very early days. Most of the major

changes only took place in September 2019. There has not been enough time to see major benefits yet.

Together, staff form a cohesive team. Morale is high. Staff told me, 'We are not just colleagues, we are friends.' Governors and the Westcountry Schools multi-academy trust (MAT) leaders know the school well and check on school leaders' actions to bring about improvements. They provide support and challenge appropriately. Nevertheless, some subjects are implemented well but others are not.

The curriculum leader has developed a strong, school-wide vision. However, differences between subjects stem from the effectiveness of the individual subject leaders. In history, key stage 2 teachers ensure that knowledge and skills are taught effectively. For example, pupils in Year 5 have enjoyed learning about the Second World War. Pupils compared important characters, such as Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin. In other subjects, such as geography, leaders do not check teaching sequences in the same depth. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge.

In writing, pupils are well supported to practise and build on their knowledge and skills. Pupils learn what they should, when they should. Pupils have developed a wide vocabulary from high-quality class novels. The most able pupils write with flair and imagination. As a result, teachers' expectations are rising, and the quality of pupils' writing is improving.

The mathematics curriculum shows what pupils should learn each term, helping teachers to plan in a logical order. This has supported pupils in key stage 2 to solve complex problems and perform advanced calculations. This prepares them for their next stage in learning well. However, the mathematics curriculum in key stage 1 does not provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils. This slows these pupils' mathematical development.

Children flourish in the Nursery class. Staff make sure that children develop their early reading and writing skills well. However, this start is not always built on as well as it could be. Leaders have not ensured that teachers are following a consistent phonics programme in the Reception class and Year 1 to support pupils' progress with reading. Books selected to read at home are not carefully matched to the sounds pupils are learning. Although staff are trained to teach phonics, their practice varies. Some pupils are not able to make the connection between letters and the sounds they represent quickly enough. This has slowed the development of children's reading.

Leaders identify pupils with SEND accurately. The special educational needs coordinator puts the right support in place. Additional sessions, led by trained assistants, help pupils who are falling behind to catch up quickly.

Leaders organise activities which extend pupils' classroom experiences. For example, pupils enjoyed working with the Royal Shakespeare Company to perform 'Matilda'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to spot signs of neglect or abuse. They follow the school's policy for managing concerns. They work effectively with other agencies to ensure that pupils get the help they need.

Leaders make appropriate checks to ensure that anyone working in the school is safe to do so.

Leaders act swiftly on any concerns that are brought to their attention. However, some staff do not prioritise the reporting of pupils' worries to senior leaders. This has left some pupils feeling unheard. Improvements to these procedures happened during this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- During the inspection, pupils behaved well. However, some parents have concerns about the academy's management of behaviour and bullying. It is important that MAT and academy leaders continue to reach out to the parental community to resolve any remaining concerns.
- Leaders have not planned a consistent approach to the implementation of phonics. Pupils read carefully matched books in school. However, they select books to read at home that sometimes do not match the sounds they know. As a result, pupils' reading progress in key stage 1 is slow. Leaders need to make regular checks to ensure that teachers are following a consistent policy on the teaching of phonics.
- The mathematics curriculum in key stage 1 does not take into account the abilities of some pupils, particularly the most able. This slows their learning. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum planning and implementation of mathematics in key stage 1 meet the needs of all groups of pupils well.
- An effective curriculum is not in place for all subjects. Where curriculum organisation is well designed, pupils know more and remember more. However, all subject leaders need to ensure that subject-specific content is well organised and successfully implemented.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged Oreston Community Academy to be good on 20 May 2011.

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 are the school and you are 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	136380
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10122386
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	459
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Iain Grafton
Headteacher	Esther Best
Website	www.orestonacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	28 January 2016

Information about this school

- The school joined the Westcountry Schools Trust in September 2017.
- The current headteacher was appointed in January 2019.

Information about this inspection

- I visited lessons with the headteacher.
- I scrutinised samples of pupils' work.
- I talked formally with pupils from the school council, as well as with other pupils informally across the school.
- I held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, curriculum leaders, teachers, members of the local governing board, the lead for pupils with SEND and the primary director for school improvement from the MAT.
- I evaluated documentary and other types of information, including evidence relating to safeguarding.
- I analysed 146 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and met with some parents at the start of the second day. I analysed responses to Ofsted's staff surveys completed during the inspection.

- I did deep dives in: reading, mathematics, writing and geography. I also looked at pupils' work in history. I met with senior and curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils. I listened to some pupils read.

Inspection team

Sue Costello, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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