

Inspection of a good school: The Oldham Academy North

Broadway, Royton, Oldham, Greater Manchester OL2 5BF

Inspection dates:

10–11 March 2020

Outcome

The Oldham Academy North continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Oldham Academy North is a school which lives and breathes cultural diversity and inclusivity. The pupils that we spoke with said that people of all backgrounds, faiths and differences come here. They get along well and are happy.

Pupils say that there is very little bullying. Pupils can be themselves. Pupils with different lifestyles are not marginalised. Teachers are quick to spot and deal with any signs of bullying, before it gets out of hand.

Pupils behave well and try hard in class. They listen to teachers and others, ask questions and contribute their own idea. Pupils say that there is low-level disruption only very occasionally. This is in those lessons when their usual class teachers are absent.

Pupils conduct themselves well between lessons, and at break and lunchtimes. They are punctual to lessons. The school is a happy and lively place at lunchtime. Pupils enjoy one another's company and smile a lot. They like to socialise, attend clubs or play games.

Pupils benefit from the high expectations of the new headteacher, trust leaders and others. These leaders work with purpose and pace, to secure pupils' bright futures. Pupils have no doubt that these adults want only the best for them.

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

Most pupils have achieved well in their GCSE examinations over recent years. This includes disadvantaged pupils. However, the previous curriculum did not meet the best interests of some pupils. The recently appointed headteacher and other leaders identified these weaknesses. They have wasted no time in putting them right.

Previously, the school provided key stage 4 courses which restricted pupils' choices or were not in their educational best interests. The headteacher and recently appointed trust

leaders have acted decisively and this is no longer the case. The school now provides key stage 4 courses which match pupils' needs and interests.

Current leaders have quickly tackled previous weaknesses in the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They were provided with a watered-down curriculum, especially in key stage 3. This is no longer the case. Pupils with SEND now achieve better than before.

The speed and scale at which new leaders have acted has left some parents and carers feeling out of touch. Leaders are aware of this and have responded. They have introduced new ways in which parents can keep in touch with what goes on at the school.

Curriculum plans are well organised across most subjects. They help teachers to build up pupils' learning in a helpful order. Some plans are especially strong. These plans take account of pupils' interests and backgrounds, to help shape what pupils will learn about. This supports pupils to think hard about what they study.

The curriculum is delivered well for most pupils. Teachers receive the training that they need to improve on what they already know and do. Pupils value their education. They work hard in class and do their best. Pupils' concentration rarely slips. Only when their usual teacher is absent, do pupils say that some misbehave, and this affects their learning.

The curriculum supports pupils' good literacy very well. Pupils read regularly. They strengthen their subject-specific vocabulary in their lessons. Pupils say that they benefit especially from the thirty minutes put aside each day to read with their form teacher. Pupils take this time seriously. They say reading is important, and they enjoy the books that they read.

All pupils take part in the 'E-ACT Passport' wider curriculum. They enjoy trips to museums, art galleries and theatres. They take part in residential visits and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils visit universities. They also take part in the inclusive activities provided by one of the local football clubs. A variety of clubs are offered, ranging from sports clubs to pet club. Leaders try to provide something for everyone. Pupils draw upon these experiences. They help to raise pupils' ambitions, well-being and understanding of the world.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff take pupils' safety and well-being very seriously. They take the time to know pupils well and keep a close eye on them. Leaders provide regular and up-to-date training, so staff know what to look out for if pupils are unhappy or might be at risk. Staff know how to deal with safeguarding concerns. Leaders ensure that, when such concerns are identified, vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate support. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. They know who to contact if they are worried or unhappy.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Previous curriculum plans for pupils with SEND did not fully equip them to achieve well enough. These pupils were not provided with a broad enough range of subjects to study in key stage 3. They missed out on some important knowledge. These systemic weaknesses have been addressed by current leaders. Pupils with SEND now follow the full range of subjects at key stage 3, and cover what they need to know. However, pupils in key stage 4 still have some gaps in their knowledge. Leaders need to be sure of the knowledge that these pupils are missing in some subjects and take action to build this into their curriculums. This will enable these pupils to achieve well by the end of key stage 4.
- Pupils' opportunities to follow courses that match their needs and interests at key stage 4 have been restricted. Few pupils have followed the academic English Baccalaureate (EBacc) curriculum in recent years. Only around two percent of pupils achieved the qualifications required to meet the requirements of the EBacc in 2019. The recently appointed headteacher has made the changes necessary to overcome these deficiencies and restrictions. Pupils choosing their GCSE courses this year have a wider choice. There has also been a significant rise in those opting for the EBacc. Leaders should continue to strengthen the curriculum offer at key stage 4, so that even more pupils are prepared to follow an ambitious and academic range of courses, including in the EBacc.

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 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 24–25 May 2016.

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	136115
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10122053
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	1,223
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sir Michael Wemms
Principal	Rachael Hallam
Website	http://theoldhamacademynorth.e-act.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 May 2016

Information about this school

- The Oldham Academy North is part of the E-ACT trust.
- A new headteacher was appointed in January 2020.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Kingsland School, Positive Steps and Saddleworth Environmental Education.

Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders. We spoke on the phone to the chief executive officer of the trust.
- We reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority. We spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe. We also asked the pupils how they keep themselves safe and what to do if they have concerns.
- We held discussions with staff and considered the 61 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- We spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses of the 34 pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

- We considered the views of the 64 parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey, including the 50 free-text responses. We also considered the views of the parents who contacted us during the inspection by e-mail and telephone.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: art, English, history, and science. We discussed the arrangements for the curriculum and teaching with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. We visited lessons and then talked with pupils about what they had learned. We looked at examples of pupils’ work in their exercise books and folders in these subjects.

Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Caldecott	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Pennington	Ofsted Inspector

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