

Inspection of Olive Ap - Academy Suffolk

Chilton Way, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 1SZ

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are referred to the school by the local authority. Pupils have a range of very different, complex needs. Many have missed long periods of schooling. Pupils do not have access to an ambitious, well-organised curriculum. Pupils are not helped to overcome their difficulties so that they can return to and remain successfully in education.

Not all pupils behave well enough. They say they feel safe, but inspectors found that at times, serious, disruptive behaviour puts them and staff at risk of harm. Pupils feel free from bullying but would like other pupils to stop swearing. Not all pupils attend regularly.

Pupils of different ages with similar needs are taught together in 'pathways'. This presents difficulties for staff in preparing learning for pupils that is suitably challenging and builds on what they know and can already do. While some older pupils are appropriately supported with external tuition in mathematics, there is no clear plan in place to teach pupils to read or to improve their basic literacy skills.

Pupils enjoy opportunities to learn practical skills in physical education, cookery and bricklaying. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities beyond the curriculum to broaden their experiences and develop their personal talents and interests. Careers education is limited. It does not ensure pupils are fully prepared for the next stage of their lives. Arrangements to safeguard pupils and protect them from harm are not secure. Staff do not always take every action to ensure that vulnerable pupils remain safe.

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

There are weaknesses in the quality of education provided for pupils. Curriculum planning across many subjects, including English and mathematics, is not firmly in place. Vocational subjects introduced to the curriculum to motivate and engage pupils are new and not yet fully planned. Not all subjects have staff in place with the knowledge needed to plan learning and lead improvements.

Planning does not consider the different needs and abilities of pupils. It does not take into account the gaps in pupils' knowledge caused by time missed in their previous schools or by lost learning due to absence or exclusion from school. In lessons, pupils often end up doing activities that are not helpful to their learning. Leaders are unaware of how well the curriculum is planned and taught, because they do not routinely monitor it or the impact this has on pupils' learning and progress.

There is no clear plan in place to teach pupils how to read effectively. Many pupils have significant gaps in their learning, especially in reading and writing. The curriculum does not include daily, planned opportunities for them to practise and strengthen these important skills.

Pastoral care provided in daily tutorials welcomes pupils into school and helps them to settle in. However, it does not prevent serious disruption happening later in the day. When behaviour deteriorates, the school can become an unsafe place for pupils and staff. Poor behaviour can escalate quickly, with no obvious consequences for those who misbehave. There is no consistent approach taken by staff to manage inappropriate behaviour. Pupils are unaware of the expectations of them or the rules to follow. Physical interventions are used too often. Consequently, pupils do not behave well enough.

Leaders acknowledge that the needs of some pupils referred by the local authority cannot be met in school. Recently, leaders have rejected some referrals of pupils when they feel they are unable to meet their specific needs. The school does not have the capacity to support all pupils well. A significant proportion of pupils are on part-time timetables. Some do not come into school and are taught by tutors. Pupils do not experience a broad, balanced curriculum. This contributes to much of the daily disruption.

Too many pupils are regularly absent from school. This, combined with a high rate of exclusion, means that pupils miss too much of their education. Not enough is done to promote pupils' personal development. They are not fully prepared for the next stage of their lives. They do not have regular opportunities to learn how to become confident, resilient or independent. Pupils do not receive the careers education they need to make the right choices at the end of Year 11.

A large proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many of these pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). These plans do not ensure that all pupils receive the care and support they need. The plans do not consider pupils' full range of learning and welfare needs or set clear targets to enable staff to check how well pupils are doing. Work is underway to improve this. However, it is too early to judge the impact.

Trust leaders have begun to make changes. They are forging new relations with the local authority to ensure that staff can make a significant difference to those pupils who are referred to the school. These arrangements are very new. An established academy advisory board brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the school. Members acknowledge that they need to do much more to determine a clear, new vision for the purpose of the school to accelerate its improvement.

Since opening as an academy, changes in staffing have led to some turmoil, which has slowed the school's development. The trust has taken recent action to improve this. New leaders and staff have been appointed to increase the capacity to make improvements. Classrooms, corridors and play areas have been refurbished. These changes are new but are beginning to contribute towards improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There is not a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff do not take every reasonable action to check that vulnerable pupils are kept safe by following up concerns in a timely manner. Inspectors found serious failings in maintaining the school's safeguarding records. A senior leader has taken responsibility for this important area and has begun to make improvements. Further training in safeguarding is planned for staff. The single central record is secure. All the necessary checks are made when appointing adults to work with children.

During the inspection, a serious safeguarding incident occurred. Leaders ensured that this was dealt with sensitively and effectively, which ensured that the pupil involved remained safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not well planned. Planning is not in place for all subjects. Not all subjects have a leader with the knowledge needed to secure improvements. Trust leaders must ensure that a well-planned, ambitious curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils is promptly put in place. They should provide staff with the training they need to teach effectively and lead improvement in their subjects.
- Behaviour is not always managed well enough. Regular disruption places pupils and staff at risk of harm. Leaders should establish clear, agreed rules for pupils to follow and ensure that all staff receive the training they need to modify pupil's behaviours and manage disruption consistently.
- Pupils' personal development is not promoted well enough. They are not fully prepared for the next stage of their lives because they do not experience regular opportunities to develop confidence, resilience and independence. Pupils do not get the advice they need before they leave school. Leaders need to review pupils' personal development curriculum to ensure it is well considered and pupils receive the opportunities they need so they are better prepared for when they move on from the school.
- The inspection has identified widespread weaknesses in the school's work. Leaders, together with trustees and the advisory board, should consider these findings carefully. They should work collectively to determine a clear, new vision for the purpose of the school and put in place effective plans for improvement.

Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers (ECTs) before the next monitoring inspection.

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 information from Ofsted

Parent View 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

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| Unique reference number | 142820 |
| Local authority | Suffolk |
| Inspection number | 10200560 |
| Type of school | Alternative provision |
| School category | Academy alternative provision sponsored |
| Age range of pupils | 7 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 61 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Philip Whall |
| Headteacher | Alastair Burnett |
| Website | apsuffolk.oliveacademies.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school converted to an academy on 1 September 2016. When its predecessor school, Kingsfield Centre, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require special measures.
- Olive AP caters for pupils from seven to 16 years who have been referred to the school by the local authority. Pupils have been excluded from their mainstream school. Many of them have missed long periods of their schooling.
- It has places for 60 pupils and a further 36 places for pupils with SEND who have an EHC plan.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND, including those with an EHC plan, is above average.
- The majority of pupils are white British. Very few are from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The headteacher and executive headteacher were appointed to the school this year.
- The school uses the following off-site provision: Wood Monkeys, Bury St

Edmunds; PLOT (philosophy, life skills, opportunities and tenacity), Ipswich; The Green Light Trust, Bury St Edmunds; and CS Education Services, Stowmarket.

Information about this inspection

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

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, an ECT, a group of pupils, four members of the academy advisory board (one in person, three online), and the chief executive officer of the Olive Academies Multi-Academy Trust.
- An inspector held a telephone discussion with a representative of Suffolk local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, personal, social and health education and vocational learning. This included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, discussions with staff and pupils and scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's single central record and met with the designated leads for safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 10 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and nine free-text responses from parents. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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