

Inspection of Thomas Wolsey Ormiston Academy

Defoe Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 6SG

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils experience a good education at their school. They access a curriculum that supports all aspects of their learning and prepares them well as they move on to further study. Making sure that pupils are able to express themselves is of utmost importance in this curriculum. Pupils become skilled at communicating using a variety of methods and devices. They become confident in communicating with different people to share their ideas, their likes and dislikes, and their views.

Pupils enjoy attending school. They enjoy playtime, and they like playing games together in the playground. The relationships between pupils and staff are very positive. There is a real 'can do' approach and staff are highly ambitious for what every pupil can achieve, both in their time in school and after they leave. Pupils are confident that if they had a problem with another pupil, staff would help sort it out quickly and effectively.

A highlight of many pupils' week is the music and movement club for pupils of all ages and abilities. Pupils get lots of opportunities for physical development that matches their varied abilities, interests and needs. In particular, many pupils find swimming fun, and it helps their development.

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

The curriculum is well planned to meet the varied and complex needs of pupils who attend the school. Pupils access a broad range of subjects in all year groups. Curriculum plans provide a level of detail that ensures that all pupils get access to the same high-quality curriculum and that teachers can use and adapt these plans to support individual pupils' needs across lessons. Leaders have ensured that this curriculum supports pupils to make progress in a range of areas that prepare them well to move on to their next stages as young adults.

In the early years, staff get to know children and their families well. They have a good understanding of the expectations for the early years foundation stage and of children's individual needs. Leaders have created a curriculum that sets children up well for moving into Year 1 and builds their confidence and skills securely. The classroom and resources are well organised to support children's learning and physical needs. Leaders have identified that the early years outdoor area does not reflect the same high-quality support for pupils' development, and it is currently being refurbished.

Central to the school's curriculum is the development of communication, literacy and reading. Most staff are well trained in the various methods of communication used by pupils. These staff members use these methods to help encourage pupils to actively participate in discussions about their learning and their views. Most staff use an appropriate range of resources to support the development of pupils' communication, including sensory resources, music, light and sound. Early reading is

taught well, as staff are well trained and use the school's chosen phonics programme and resources appropriately. Reading and a love of stories is encouraged throughout the school. Older pupils access stories and texts that are appropriate to their abilities and interests. Most staff are adept at adapting texts and using different communication methods to engage pupils with stories.

Where remote learning is needed on occasion to support individual pupils for a period of time, these pupils follow the same curriculum as their class in school and access online lessons to stay in touch with their class and their teacher.

However, despite the many strengths in the planning and delivery of the curriculum, some staff are not as well trained in adapting the curriculum for specific pupils' sensory needs or in using the intended resources effectively when delivering the curriculum to pupils. On these occasions, pupils can disengage with the learning and go off task.

The curriculum is underpinned by a high-quality trips, visits and extra-curricular programme, which is well adapted to ensure that pupils can access a full range of activities. These activities include residential trips focused on climbing and using zip wires, sailing, theatre and musical performances, and a wide range of art, music and dance activities. This supports pupils' understanding of community participation, while also building their communication and physical skills.

Leaders focus on pupils' transition to adulthood throughout their time at the school. This programme of support and guidance includes independent careers education and work experience, or work-related learning opportunities which are relevant to pupils' interests, abilities and aspirations. All pupils have careers education and experience of work or work experience opportunities. There is a well-established programme of college visits to enable pupils and parents to make informed choices about the next step. Leaders also work closely with other external agencies to make sure that pupils and their families are best supported for other aspects of pupils' transition to adulthood, independent living, health support and financial guidance.

Pupils are well behaved. They are very respectful of each other and their differences. They understand that they have different needs. Where pupils do struggle with behaviour, highly consistent approaches mean that they are supported in a positive way to improve.

Leaders from the school, the multi-academy trust and governors know what leaders are doing well and areas that are in need of further development. Leaders and other staff have benefited from the school improvement work put in place by the multi-academy trust. However, the written plans for improvement are not yet clear enough on who will do what and when. The wider staff team do not all know what they need to do to improve provision and why.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are well trained and take all reasonable actions to keep pupils safe, including timely and effective engagement with external agencies.

Staff use a comprehensive recording system to note communication with all relevant agencies, including health, social care, parents/carers, and other appropriate agencies. Leaders track all aspects of pupils' development, including unusual behaviours. This enables leaders to have a joined-up view of each pupil and to spot early signs that a pupil may be vulnerable.

Leaders are skilled at identifying where a pupil may need additional support to keep themselves safe. They adapt the curriculum as needed to meet the needs of the pupils as issues arise.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff are not as well trained and confident to use sensory strategies or practical resources to fully enhance aspects of the curriculum and meet pupils' needs. When this occurs, pupils do not have the appropriate physical reference points for learning and can become disengaged, waiting rather than learning. Staff need to be supported to develop strategies to support pupils' sensory needs and use the intended curriculum resources more effectively so that pupils are actively engaged in their learning and access the curriculum as fully as intended.
- Leaders know what to do to further improve the school, but this is not clearly planned out in terms of what will happen and when. This means that it is not clear who will do what. Staff do not know what the improvement journey means for them. Whole-school improvement planning needs to be more detailed and shared more effectively with staff so that they know their responsibilities in improving provision.

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

Unique reference number	137838
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10200537
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Hann
Principal	Helen MacDougall
Website	www.thomaswolseyoa.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Thomas Wolsey Ormiston Academy provides education for pupils who have complex physical, medical and/or sensory needs with associated learning difficulties. All pupils are in receipt of an education, health and care plan.
- Leaders provide an assessment for all children while they are in Nursery. These assessments are used by the local authority to decide on further placement arrangements for children. At the end of the Nursery Year, some pupils move on to other appropriate educational settings.
- A very small number of pupils are currently taught remotely due to their medical needs.
- The school provides space for a number of therapy and healthcare teams working with pupils as part of the National Health Service.
- The school is located on the same site as Ormiston Endeavour Academy.
- The school first became an academy in 2012 as a single academy converter, then joined the Ormiston Academies Trust in February 2018.

Information about this inspection

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

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 spoke to the principal, acting vice-principal and other members of the leadership team. They spoke to the multi-academy trust's primary and special educational needs and/or disabilities director and the chair of the local governing body. They spoke to a wide range of pupils and members of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into reading, communication and interaction, mathematics and physical development. As part of these, they spoke to leaders, examined curriculum plans, visited lessons, saw evidence of pupils' work, and spoke to teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors also looked at other subjects' curriculum plans and visited a sample of lessons.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to pupils and staff, they looked at a sample of safeguarding records, and they scrutinised the single central record.
- Inspectors took account of the 21 responses to the survey for staff and the 22 responses to the parents' survey.

Inspection team

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Wilson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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