

Inspection of Purple Oaks Academy

Whiston Road, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN2 7RR

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils develop their communication skills, independence and emotional regulation well through the curriculum. Leaders and staff have high expectations for pupils. Staff ensure all pupils can access the curriculum. Pupils typically learn in small group arrangements. Some enjoy one-to-one teaching. Learning is matched to pupils' individual needs. Pupils work towards achieving suitable targets based on their education, health and care plans (EHC plan). Staff work well with parents and carers and external agencies to nurture and support pupils.

Most pupils enjoy school. Consistent routines help pupils to feel safe. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Staff know pupils well. Pupils know adults they can go to if they are worried. From the early years, children are provided with suitable communication tools. They learn to use them independently. They can explain their needs to adults.

Pupils' behaviour is generally good. Bullying is rare. Adults help pupils to understand and manage their behaviour. They explain why some behaviour is unacceptable. Most pupils think that staff sort out incidents of poor behaviour or bullying fairly. Pupils appreciate that adults take time to discuss with them the triggers and resolutions for any poor behaviour. Pupils enjoy trips and experiences as a reward for their improved behaviour, achievements and attendance.

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

Leaders have implemented an ambitious curriculum. It is clearly sequenced from the early years to the upper phase. Themes of learning link across different subjects. Pupils make connections in their learning and apply their skills.

In subjects such as personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and mathematics, it is clear what knowledge teachers want pupils to learn and when. Pupils build on their prior learning. Teachers revisit learning to make sure pupils can remember. For example, pupils have frequent opportunities to revisit their learning of number and place value in mathematics. In PSHE, pupils revisit and build on their understanding of safety. Yet, in some subjects, the most important knowledge teachers need to teach is not always as clear.

Children in the early years get off to a strong start. Leaders make sure that they know the nature of children's additional needs. Children settle quickly because staff establish clear routines and expectations. They adapt the learning environment to suit children's needs. They pay careful attention to children's sensory needs. Staff establish caring relationships with children. They help them to feel safe and secure.

Teachers check pupils' individual needs. They match pupils' targets to the outcomes in their EHC plans. They consider pupils' changing needs. They check often what pupils know and can remember, to plan their next steps. When necessary, pupils have extra help for their mental health and well-being. They particularly enjoy visits

from the therapy dog. Most pupils are positive about the school. One typically commented, 'Teachers really understand us as individuals.'

Leaders promote reading for pleasure. Children learn to read from the early years. Pupils who need help with reading get timely support. Teachers provide extra phonics sessions where needed. Pupils can discuss books they enjoy and authors they admire with enthusiasm. However, leaders have reviewed the teaching of phonics. They recognise that teaching could be more effective in meeting pupils' specific needs. Leaders plan to introduce a new approach to teaching phonics in the coming term.

Pupils' personal development is at the core of the school's work. Pupils learn to take responsibility for their behaviour and learning. Staff support them to be responsible citizens. Pupils learn about fundamental British values such as the importance of democracy and respect. Pupils organise and take part in charity fundraising activities. They learn about equality and diversity. They learn the importance of living healthy lifestyles. They access age-appropriate relationships, sex and health education that is adapted to their individual needs. The approach develops their understanding of this aspect of the curriculum well.

There is a programme in place to teach pupils about their options for future careers. Pupils receive independent advice and guidance about further education, employment and training. Enrichment activities help pupils to socialise and develop important life skills. For example, they enjoy baking. They take part in sporting competitions with other schools. They visit museums and theatres. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Most staff enjoy working at the school. They think that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. They appreciate the support of the whole staff team. Those who are at the early stages of their careers appreciate the training and coaching they receive.

The large majority of parents are supportive of the school. A typical comment was that the staff make the school 'a lovely, supportive, fun, happy, caring, educational environment for my child'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive relevant and up-to-date training. Leaders provide staff with the latest information about the welfare of pupils in their care. Pupils learn how to keep safe starting in the early years. They learn how to communicate any worries they may have to staff. As pupils move through school, they learn about potential risks to their safety and how to manage them. These include risks from peer pressure and when using the internet.

Trustees make sure that checks on the safeguarding of pupils are an ongoing, high priority. Leaders work effectively with external services, when necessary, to manage safeguarding concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have revised the curriculum. The content for what they want pupils to learn and when is outlined. Teachers adapt learning to meet pupils' individual needs. However, some subjects have only recently been reviewed. Not all state clearly the key knowledge that teachers need to teach. Subject leaders should ensure that teachers understand the important knowledge that pupils need to know for each subject.
- There is a structured programme in place to teach phonics. However, leaders have identified that the teaching of phonics is not meeting pupils' needs as well as it could. Leaders are in the process of introducing a new approach for the teaching of phonics. Leaders should ensure that the new systematic synthetic programme to teach phonics is implemented as soon as possible and that all staff are trained to teach it.

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	144759
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10212017
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mike Hamlin
Principal	Sarah Martin
Website	www.purpleoaksacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2017.
- The school is a member of the Greenwood Academies Trust.
- The school admits pupils with autism spectrum disorder and/or severe learning difficulties.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Since the school opened, several new staff have been appointed.
- There are currently no post-16 pupils attending the school.
- There are currently no children of nursery age.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, the deputy principal and several curriculum leaders. They also spoke to members of staff. Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and met with several groups of pupils. Inspectors met with the strategic director of special academies and the chief executive officer of the trust. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the chair of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into early reading, mathematics, PSHE and physical education. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans for these subjects, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors spoke to curriculum leaders and looked at planning and pupils' work for other subjects, such as science and geography. The lead inspector listened to pupils reading.
- Inspectors discussed with leaders and staff the school's approach to safeguarding pupils and checked the single central record. Inspectors reviewed records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Checks were made on staff's training and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rachel Tordoff	Her Majesty's Inspector

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