

Inspection of King Alfred's

Portway, Wantage, Oxfordshire OX12 9BY

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils remark on the positive changes that have happened at King Alfred's in recent times. They say that the way in which pupils behave has improved. In class, pupils are calm and ready to learn. They enjoy their learning. Pupils follow the well-established routines of the school in a mature and responsible way. They say that there is not much about the school they would improve.

Most pupils report that bullying is something that does not happen often. If it does, many pupils say that teachers deal with it well. They know how to get help if they need it. Certainly, the vast majority of pupils feel safe at school.

Leaders have set about raising expectations in the school. Many teachers are asking more of their pupils. However, in some subject areas, these expectations could be higher. Pupils learn best where their teachers are checking carefully on how well they have understood the learning.

Pupils are generally happy at the school. They get along well with each other. Most parents and carers are also pleased with what the school offers their child. As one parent commented, 'I can see how hard the staff are working and feel they have made great strides since the last Ofsted report.'

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

Leaders have been steadily making improvements to the curriculum since the previous inspection. They have looked carefully at the content and the order in which they teach this knowledge to the pupils. There is now greater coherence in what and how pupils learn. Staff have been supported by leaders in their professional development to bring about the many improvements to the design and delivery of the curriculum. Behaviour has improved markedly. Pupils are polite and cooperative, although sometimes rather muted in class. Teachers are using effective strategies to encourage pupils to take a more active role in their learning.

However, this work is not quite finished. Leaders have recognised, for instance, that the two-year key stage 3 provision is limiting. Teachers are now planning for the September introduction of a three-year key stage 3 and an increase in the scope and depth of the subjects they teach. Leaders are also changing how they guide pupils in their subject choices at key stage 4. They have seen that there has been a decline in the previously high numbers of pupils taking English Baccalaureate subjects. They are making changes to rectify this. In the sixth form, students benefit from a broad and stimulating range of subjects and qualifications.

Teachers' subject knowledge across the school is strong. They often demonstrate expertise in the way in which they help pupils to take on new ideas and consolidate their learning. In subjects such as English and mathematics, pupils learn in a systematic and thorough way. Teachers here check carefully and accurately how well pupils are learning. On occasions, in a few subjects, pupils' learning is not as strong.

Where this is the case, teachers' use of assessment is not rigorous enough. They do not routinely pick up if pupils are failing to grasp knowledge and concepts fully. In the sixth form, on the other hand, there is thoroughness in how teachers check on progress. The delivery of the curriculum in the sixth form is of a high standard. Students achieve very well in the sixth form.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported in the curriculum. Their needs are identified early through careful observation and assessment. Leaders make sure that teachers know how to adapt their teaching to suit the needs of individual pupils. They have also created a team of staff who provide additional guidance and support where needed. Although staff and pupils appreciate this investment of resource, some parents of pupils with SEND are still not happy with the provision for their child.

The school takes the personal development of pupils seriously. Leaders have established an array of opportunities and experiences throughout all year groups. For instance, pupils are eagerly awaiting the forthcoming musical production. Charity events go on throughout the year, with pupils raising thousands of pounds. Pupils are knowledgeable about matters relating to their physical and mental health and relationships, but older pupils in particular would like more time to discuss such issues.

The headteacher and senior leaders and governors have effectively implemented a wide range of beneficial changes in the school. They have achieved this while also taking care of staff well-being and workload. Leaders have created mostly strong relationships with parents, although some parents would like better communication with the school. The trust works well with the school to aid its development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders focus sharply on safeguarding processes and practice. They ensure that staff receive appropriate training. They also follow up information about pupil well-being and communicate this in a secure and timely way. Leaders have created a tight safeguarding team whose members work well together. They recognise the additional challenge of creating a secure safeguarding culture in such a large school, working across different sites. Leaders act on concerns quickly, but do not always find that other agencies respond as speedily.

Governors and the trust carry out their duties to check that leaders conduct recruitment procedures in accordance with the law.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not all have access to a full and ambitious curriculum. Leaders know that this needs to improve, and have devised changes to the curriculum to be introduced in September. It is clear from their actions that they are in the process of bringing about the necessary improvements, and therefore the transitional arrangements have been applied. Leaders need to ensure that these changes are put in place as planned.
- Currently, not all teachers check consistently and systematically how well pupils learn the curriculum. At times, some pupils do not understand the content in lessons and teachers do not notice. This affects pupils' progress because staff are not picking up on insecure knowledge or misconceptions. Leaders need to make sure that assessment in the school is providing accurate information about how well pupils have learned the intended content, so that staff can amend their teaching accordingly.
- Some pupils feel that they do not always have enough time or opportunities to discuss important matters pertinent to their well-being in sufficient depth. Leaders should ensure that planned improvements to the personal development offer are enacted as soon as possible.

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	137140
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10211703
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,641
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	387
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Elisabeth Taylor
Headteacher	Rick Holroyd
Website	www.kaacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	9 and 10 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- King Alfred's is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school operates on two distinct sites, with a separate sixth-form building on the central site.
- The school currently uses a range of alternative provision.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new headteacher and has also moved from three sites to two, which has involved an extensive building programme.

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 had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements. They looked at relevant documentation, staff recruitment checks and training. They also considered how well adults in the school act on emerging concerns.
- Staff's and pupils' views were gathered through informal discussions with inspectors. The inspectors also considered 361 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 252 free-text comments. There were 102 responses to the staff survey and 578 replies to the pupil questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with leaders, governors and trustees, including the chair of governors and the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art, geography, religious education and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, talked to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke with leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.

Inspection team

Yasmin Maskatiya, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Carlyle	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Doherty	Ofsted Inspector
Neil Strowger	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Lower	Her Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022