

Inspection of The Open Academy

Salhouse Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 9DL

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders do not always follow up on pupils' safeguarding worries appropriately. As a consequence, pupils are potentially at risk of harm.

Sixth form students have a positive experience in school. Their curriculum is ambitious and helps them to achieve well. They behave well in class and during social times. Students appreciate the wide range of opportunities they receive to prepare for their next stage of education or training.

Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 do not achieve as well as they should. This is because teachers' expectations of what they can achieve are too low.

Although pupils recognise that behaviour has improved, there remains some disruption to learning. This hinders pupils' ability to achieve well. During social time, not all pupils behave sufficiently well. Poor language is too regular a feature.

Pupils have positive relationships with staff. They have confidence in staff to support them well. Pupils say that, although, sometimes bullying can happen, they can talk to adults who they trust to intervene to keep them safe. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to learn about healthy relationships and they know how to keep themselves safe, particularly when online.

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

Leaders, including the trust, have not ensured there is sufficient capacity to undertake all appropriate and reasonable action to keep pupils safe. This has led to significant failings, especially for some of the most vulnerable pupils.

Leaders have begun to improve the school's curriculum. In most areas, they have thought about the order in which to teach content to support pupils' learning. However, leaders sometimes do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is reflected in their curriculum plans which lack ambition and do not challenge pupils enough over time. As a consequence, what teachers teach does not allow pupils to achieve as well as they should.

Too often, teachers do not check precisely enough what pupils have learned. Teachers do not routinely adapt their teaching to correct pupils' misconceptions. Therefore, some pupils who need extra help, or who have gaps in their learning, do not achieve well.

Reading stands apart from these weaker areas of education. Teachers are well trained in delivering the effective reading curriculum. Pupils receive appropriate help if they fall behind their peers. This ensures that pupils become confident and fluent readers.

The needs of some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not accurately identified. This is particularly so for pupils without an education, health and care plan. Sometimes, pupils' learning needs are overlooked, with too much focus being placed on them simply being in the classroom and not enough on helping them to learn. As a result, many pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

The curriculum in the sixth form is better planned and implemented than elsewhere in the school. Teachers are well trained and secure in their subject knowledge. They are effective in ensuring students learn the planned curriculum well. Students access a well-planned programme for their wider development. This prepares them effectively for their adult life.

There have been significant attendance issues, caused in part by the pandemic. However, while this is the case, when pupils have returned to school, sufficient support is not in place to help pupils catch up. They continue to have gaps in their knowledge.

Pupils behave well in most lessons. However, some teachers have lower expectations of pupils' behaviour and are not sufficiently trained in dealing with poorer behaviour. This results in low-level disruption to some lessons. This is a cause of frustration to pupils who want to focus on their work.

Leaders have implemented an effective personal development curriculum, where pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and are 'encouraged to be yourself'. Pupils enjoy a wide range of trips and visits. They have opportunities to develop their character through taking on positions of responsibility, such as on the school council. Pupils receive helpful and objective careers advice. As a result, they are able to make informed decisions about their next steps.

Staff are positive about how leaders support them. Almost all staff say that they enjoy working at the school and are of the view that leaders consider their well-being and workload.

The trust and governors have overseen improvements in some areas of leaders' work. For example, clear curriculum intent has been introduced in all subject areas. However, they have been too slow to address and challenge weaknesses in other areas. For example, in checking leaders' work on implementing the agreed safeguarding arrangements and in challenging leaders' low expectations, especially for pupils with SEND.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders do not always share the information that they should with external agencies. When information is shared, it is not always done quickly enough.

Records of safeguarding cases are not thorough. This leaves pupils potentially at risk of harm as their concerns are not adequately dealt with.

Leaders have made sure that an effective personal development programme ensures that pupils know how to stay safe. Pupils are supported by a team of staff who promote effective pastoral care.

Staff are vigilant and have received appropriate training, which ensures they raise any concerns they have about pupils' well-being.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders, including the trust, have not ensured effective oversight of safeguarding records or made sure that timely action is taken to keep pupils safe. Vulnerable pupils are potentially left at risk of harm. Leaders urgently need to ensure all safeguarding records are accurate and that effective and prompt help is given to those pupils who need it.
- Leaders and the trust have not fully developed processes for supporting pupils with SEND. This means that some pupils with SEND do not get effective help to learn, attend and behave as well as they should. Leaders need to ensure that staff are sufficiently trained and guided to support pupils with SEND effectively.
- Leaders' expectations of pupils' behaviour are inconsistent and sometimes too low. Despite recent improvements, a small cohort of pupils in each year group account for a high proportion of low-level disruption to lessons and around the school. Leaders should raise expectations and assist staff to ensure they are effectively supporting all pupils to improve their behaviour, which in turn will help pupils access their learning more successfully.
- Teachers' delivery of the intended curriculum is hampered by low expectations and weaker assessment processes in some areas. This means that teachers and leaders do not always ensure that pupils learn well, or know how well pupils are faring, especially when pupils have been absent and have gaps in their learning. Leaders should ensure that staff have high expectations and are well trained in a variety of assessment strategies that allow them to identify where pupils need further support to learn effectively.

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	135650
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10227776
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	586
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	62
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	William Crawshay
Principal	Jon Ford
Website	www.open-academy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 – 7 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Open Academy is a smaller than average 11 to 19 secondary school which is part of The Diocese of Norwich Multi Academy Trust.
- The school has a specialist resource base for 10 pupils who have autism spectrum disorder. These pupils attend lessons as well as receiving individual support in the resource base.
- Leaders use four unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

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

- Inspectors met with representatives from the trust, the local governing body, school leaders, staff and pupils over the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history and physical education. As part of each deep dive, inspectors spoke to subject leaders about the curriculum, spoke to staff and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also evaluated the quality of provision throughout other areas of the curriculum.
- The lead inspector checked the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks and met with the designated safeguarding lead and deputies to discuss how the school keeps pupils safe. A range of safeguarding documents were reviewed.
- Inspectors considered the 85 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, as well as 51 responses to the staff survey and 115 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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