

Inspection of an outstanding school: Ormiston Chadwick Academy

Liverpool Road, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 7HU

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 October 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils said that they are happy at school. They spoke positively about their experiences. Pupils said that there is always someone whom they can talk to if they feel worried or need help. They explained that this helps them to feel cared for and safe in school. In the main, pupils are tolerant of, and respectful towards, each other. Bullying is rare, and pupils said that if it does happen, it is dealt with well.

Pupils know that their teachers have high expectations of their behaviour. Typically, classrooms are calm and pupils work well without distractions to their learning. Pupils understand the school rules. Pupils are helped to regulate their behaviour at social times.

Pupils benefit from an ambitious curriculum. Teachers expect pupils to achieve highly. Pupils live up to these expectations. Most pupils try hard. Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well overall.

Pupils appreciate and enjoy the range of extra-curricular opportunities provided for them. In addition to sports and arts clubs, enrichment activities encourage pupils to try new things and to learn new skills. Examples include origami club, cultural cooking courses and the chance to learn Korean.

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

Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum structure to ensure that it better prepares pupils for the next stages of their education. They have taken swift and decisive action to overhaul what is taught at each key stage. Overall, owing to the positive changes that leaders have made to the design of the curriculum, most pupils achieve well.

In rethinking the curriculum design, leaders and trustees have reviewed and increased the range and choice of subjects that pupils study. The curriculum is increasingly broad and more ambitious for all pupils, particularly those in key stage 3. In key stage 4, more pupils are studying subjects that meet their needs and interests. For example, an increasing number of pupils are studying the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. However, some pupils are following the legacy curriculum, which prevents them from learning as well as they should.

Across the curriculum, subject leaders have identified the important knowledge and concepts that they want pupils to learn. Leaders have successfully ordered this essential knowledge so that pupils are able to build on what they already know. Teachers are well supported to develop their specialist subject knowledge. They use this expertise to break down and revisit challenging ideas and information in lessons. This helps pupils to remember more over time.

Teachers successfully help pupils to identify and to address any misconceptions in their learning. However, the systems that leaders use to assess how well pupils have learned units of work across subjects are not always as effective as they could be. Leaders are in the process of developing their assessment strategies.

Leaders ensure that teachers receive helpful information about pupils with SEND. Teachers use this to provide effective support so that these pupils can access the same learning as their peers. Leaders are also in the process of overhauling the curriculum offer for pupils with SEND, who until more recently have not achieved as well as they should.

Leaders appropriately prioritise reading. For example, pupils practise reading at the start of the day and have regular sessions in the library. Pupils who need to catch up with their reading knowledge are well supported to improve. This includes the appropriate use of systematic synthetic phonics for those at the early stages of learning to read.

Most pupils behave well. They display positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils said that they are confident that teachers will quickly challenge any behavioural concerns so that learning is not disrupted.

Pupils benefit from an effective personal development programme. This builds their understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn about healthy relationships and the importance of sexual consent. Leaders also ensure that all pupils receive useful careers information, advice and guidance. Leaders have recently introduced additional enrichment opportunities for Year 11 pupils to develop further the life skills that they need to succeed in modern Britain. This includes money management and interview skills.

Trustees and governors are continually challenging leaders to improve the curriculum. Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the quality of education that the school provides to pupils. Staff appreciate the support and consideration given to their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They understand how to identify and report any potential concerns about pupils' welfare. Leaders place a spotlight on a different safeguarding matter each week with staff. All staff and pupils discuss the risks associated with the issue highlighted by leaders as part of the curriculum. This ensures that safeguarding has a high profile in school. It creates a culture of awareness and vigilance, including of local issues.

The systems that leaders have in place to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm are effective. Leaders keep accurate records and use this detailed information to ensure that pupils and their families receive targeted and helpful support. This includes support from external agencies, when needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not fully embedded their new curriculum across the school. Some pupils remain on the legacy curriculum, which is not in their best interests. Leaders should ensure that their new curriculum is fully implemented. This is so that all pupils, including those with SEND, follow a range of subjects that meet their needs and interests.
- In some subjects, leaders' systems for assessing how well pupils have learned the curriculum over time are underdeveloped. This prevents some teachers from identifying where they should recap and revisit prior learning. Leaders should finalise their assessment systems so that teachers can establish what pupils know and remember of the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in December 2016.

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.

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	140864
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10240846
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	949
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Hann
Principal	Jennifer Lowry-Johnson
Website	www.ormistonchadwickacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Ormiston Academies Trust.
- The school makes use of three registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 met with the principal, the education director, other senior leaders, subject leaders and a range of staff. The lead inspector met representatives of the trust board and the local governing body, including the chair of the local governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector spoke to the parent of a pupil.

- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science and geography. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils and teachers.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from all year groups. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at social times.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that related to safeguarding, self-evaluation documents, and attendance and behaviour records.
- Inspectors checked on leaders' safeguarding arrangements, including the checks made on staff. Inspectors met with leaders, staff, pupils, and trustees and governors to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding in school. An inspector checked the arrangements for pupils who attend alternative provision.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Amanda Downing, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Niamh Howlett

His Majesty's Inspector

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