

# Inspection of a good school: North Oxfordshire Academy

Drayton Road, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX16 0UD

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Inspection dates:

8 and 9 November 2022

## **Outcome**

North Oxfordshire Academy continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

North Oxfordshire Academy (NOA) is a caring and inclusive school. Staff know the pupils well and, as one parent described, 'They always put the needs of the children at the heart of everything they do.' Consequently, pupils feel safe at school. Bullying is rare and staff deal effectively with any concerns.

Pupils receive a good all-round education. Leaders are determined that pupils will achieve their best. They study a wide range of subjects, both academic and vocational, including in the sixth form. Pupils benefit from being taught by enthusiastic and knowledgeable subject specialists in all areas. Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively because pupils' needs are identified clearly.

The school environment is calm and pupils are polite and respectful. There are very clear expectations of behaviour. The vast majority of pupils conduct themselves well. Where some pupils do not meet behaviour expectations, staff use the school's systems effectively to resolve issues in a measured way.

Many pupils participate in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer. Sport and music activities are particularly popular. Pupils also appreciate the numerous leadership opportunities through roles which include library ambassadors and pupil mentoring.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious. Leaders have considered it in the context of their pupils' aspirations. Consequently, leaders have introduced carefully chosen vocational pathways in key stages 4 and 5, which complement the broad range of academic courses. However, currently the school does not offer a full computing course. Leaders are taking steps aiming to rectify this.

The curriculum in each subject is well organised. Subject leaders work collaboratively with their teams and across the trust. They have clearly identified the essential knowledge that pupils need to remember and be able to apply in order to make progress. Leaders also understand the importance of reading. They have implemented a coherent reading strategy to support the curriculum and foster reading for pleasure. Pupils who need help catching up with reading receive effective support.

Teaching helps pupils to remember what they have been taught. Teachers present information clearly and logically. They provide opportunities for pupils to practise applying what they have learned. They check understanding regularly and provide feedback, which is valued by pupils. In some cases, however, teaching does not provide most-able pupils with enough opportunities to develop reasoning and problem-solving skills, using the full range of their learning. Leaders have identified that this is an area for development.

Pupils behave well and relationships between them are positive. After the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders recognised that they needed to reassert high expectations of behaviour. Consequently, there are clear routines for lessons and movement around the school. These are understood by pupils and implemented consistently by staff. The school environment is orderly. This is contributing to a reduction in the frequency and length of suspensions.

The school's culture is highly inclusive. All pupils are considered part of the 'NOA family'. Staff care that all pupils are happy and successful in all aspects of school life. Where appropriate, staff thoughtfully adapt provision for individuals. Pupils understand that bullying, discrimination and harassment are not acceptable. They recognise that the school takes these things seriously. Staff act decisively when they happen.

Pupils' wider development is effective. Subject leaders carefully consider the contribution their courses make to this. For example, the languages curriculum covers the wider Hispanic and Francophone worlds. The personal, social, health and economic curriculum is well thought through. Pupils spoke confidently to inspectors about what they have learned and why it is important. This includes how to keep themselves safe and the importance of respect for difference.

Careers education is strong. It is thoughtfully planned from Years 7 to 13. Pupils benefit from the school's links with employers and other partners. There is bespoke provision for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. This ensures that all pupils have meaningful choices post-16 and post-18. Furthermore, leaders celebrate equally those students going to Oxbridge and those following other academic or vocational routes. However, some pupils leave the school mid-key stage for other destinations or elective home education. Leaders are working closely with families to reduce this number.

Those responsible for governance have established a striking culture of trust and continuous improvement with school leaders. Consequently, governors' support and challenge are effective. They share leaders' accurate understanding of the quality of the school's work. Staff are happy and loyal to the school. They feel well supported by leaders, including with their workload.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. It is high profile and leaders have established a shared responsibility for pupils' safety and well-being. Staff and governors receive regular training and updates, including on local safeguarding issues. Staff at all levels know what to do if they have concerns about pupils. They use reporting systems very well. Parents say that their children feel safe at school. Pupils know who they can talk to if they need help, and they are confident that their concerns will be dealt with.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the wider team keep meticulous records. They monitor these regularly and respond in a timely way. They are highly reflective, so that support is adapted to meet the specific needs of the pupils at the school. The DSL works closely with teachers, pastoral and inclusion staff, as well as a range of external partners, to support pupils at risk. Governors monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements regularly and provide effective challenge to leaders.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not currently offer a computing course. This means that pupils are not taught all aspects of programming. Leaders should implement their plans to introduce computer science in key stages 3 and 4, so that pupils are taught the full breadth of this subject.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to tackle more complex questions and problems. This limits the development of fluency and expertise for high prior attaining pupils. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and confidence to adapt their learning activities, so that most-able pupils can fulfil their potential.
- A significant minority of pupils leave the school during key stages 3 and 4 to go to college or to be home educated. In some cases, this may disrupt their education. Leaders should continue to implement their strategies to reduce this wherever possible.

## Background

When we have judged good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2013.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135365
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10211564
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1007
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	128
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Yasmin Bevan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Merrills
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.northoxfordshire-academy.org">www.northoxfordshire-academy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the United Learning Multi-Academy Trust.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2020.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- 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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, music and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including governor minutes, policies and records for behaviour management, attendance, pupil movement and bullying. Inspectors also reviewed documents related to the alternative provision used by the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils at different times during the school day, including tutor time, assemblies and break- and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils from different year groups and considered their responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND. They visited lessons to look at the support these pupils were receiving.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

Mary Davies, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Morrison

Ofsted Inspector

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