

Inspection of a good school: Endeavour Academy, Oxford

Waynflete Road, Headington, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX3 8DD

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2022

Outcome

Endeavour Academy, Oxford continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are highly valued at Endeavour Academy. Staff go out of their way to understand and support every pupil's unique characteristics and needs. Positive relationships make this a school where staff and pupils want to be. Adults' ready smiles and 'high fives' reassure pupils across the day, fostering an ethos of success.

Leaders have created an environment where pupils feel safe in spite of their anxieties. Pupils' busy days often include supportive therapies and sensory experiences. These comprise of sensory activities, such as music, reflexology and massage. Choosing their own activity helps pupils to manage any feeling of unease. Top of most pupils' list is being in the outside area. Here, they use equipment that includes swings and tricycles, and relax in special spaces. The staff team does all it can to ensure pupils develop strong social skills. These are the key to prepare for adult life. Parents confirm that their children are happy at school. Typical of their views was one parent who described the school as 'life-changing'. They welcome the close cooperation between home and school.

Pupils' behaviour is not deliberate and has no intention to threaten or harass others. As a result, bullying does not occur, though it can be perceived. All adults pre-empt incidents skilfully. When they occur, staff are always on hand to restore calm.

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

Pupils follow a specialised curriculum, personalised to their needs. Teachers aim to meet students' choices for their futures. As pupils move into key stage 4, accreditations support subject interests and support structure. Developing independence is the key to every pupil's future, so they are ready for adult life.

Central to the school's provision is pupils' well-being, so that they feel safe to learn. Everyone wants the best for pupils. Before starting at the school, most pupils have experienced difficulties in education. It can take considerable time to settle into new

routines. Staff use their expertise to find out what activities help pupils to regulate these and other anxieties.

Teachers and therapists carefully assess how to assist pupils' communication. This enables pupils to begin developing basic skills in language and number. The school matches its approach to suit pupils' needs. The school's core strategy is through the use of symbols that match words. Teachers allocate prime importance to developing vocabulary and staff ensure that symbols are everywhere in the school. They are the means that support most pupils to express themselves. Grouped together, symbols comprise 'chat-boards' that assist pupil-teacher interaction. Pupils use them to read lists when shopping, follow menus when baking and to create sentences. However, adult support to use symbols for developing language through reading and writing is inconsistent. On occasion, the adults in school do not build pupils' knowledge in the very small steps that they need.

Teachers work closely with parents and therapists. Together, they plan what pupils need to learn next. Everyone knows each pupil really well and wants the best for them. On occasion, the agreed learning targets are not precise enough. This makes it difficult for all adults to interpret exactly what the focus of learning needs to be. At times, tasks do not deepen pupils' knowledge.

Once pupils have enough language skills, they are ready for a wider range of experiences. The curriculum motivates and challenges sixth-form students very well. They often focus on 'now' and 'next' but find it hard to remember 'then'. Real-life community experiences enable them to put this thinking into action. Students learn how to communicate and behave in social situations. They take part in sports and art events and have interesting work placements. These include a farm, a hotel and a café. Every day, some of the students shop and prepare the whole school lunch for the following day. Students' needs and difficulties do not dampen staff aspirations. Students leave the school having enjoyed rich experiences that equip them well for the world beyond school.

Staff know that pupils' behaviour communicates their needs and moods. Comprehensive staff training results in skilful and positive responses to behaviour. The staff's quiet approaches promote a calm environment. The school is orderly, even at times when some pupils' needs prevent them from being in the classroom. New pupils settle into the school very well because of its calm ethos.

Trustees and governors provide a clear vision that all staff share. Everyone is proud to work at the school. Teachers and support staff are concerned about some current staff shortages. These have resulted in increased workloads. Leaders and staff acknowledge these have an impact on pupils' well-being and learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Staff are trained to spot signs of abuse and they report concerns quickly, no matter how small they might be. Leaders follow up concerns diligently. They make appropriate decisions about what to refer to statutory

partners. Leaders do not hesitate to take advice if they are unsure. When necessary, they are persistent to secure the timely support that pupils and their families need. The trust ensures that the school's safeguarding procedures are robust. They carry out thorough checks on staff working at the school. Pupils are taught how to express themselves when they feel unsafe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's approach to using assistive communication for reading and writing is not consistently implemented. This means that some pupils do not build knowledge and skills sequentially. Leaders need to provide training, so that all staff have the expertise to deliver the school's approaches effectively.
- On occasion, the learning intentions to develop pupils' knowledge in basic academic skills do not identify precisely the necessary small steps in learning. This means that staff, sometimes, implement learning activities that are not matched to needs. Leaders should ensure all staff are equipped to deliver the components of learning that pupils next need to practise and know.

Background

When we have judged a school to be 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2017.

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	140217
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10200568
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Neil MacMillan
Principal	Michaela Saporova
Website	www.endeavour-academy.org
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is an academy within the MacIntyre Academy Trust.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change of headteacher. A new chair of the local advisory board was appointed at the start of the autumn term 2022.
- The school caters for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and severe learning difficulties. In addition, pupils have complex sensory needs.
- Pupils are placed on roll through the Oxfordshire local authority. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school currently does not use any alternative provision.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no primary-age pupils on the school's roll.
- The board of trustees manages a residential provision for a small number of pupils and also offers some respite places. The school runs an after-school club for pupils.

- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education 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 met with the principal, the deputy and assistant principal and other members of staff. Through virtual meetings, the lead inspector met with the chief executive of the MacIntyre Academy Trust, three members of the local advisory board, including the chair, and the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day. They also considered the views expressed by parents and staff through Ofsted's surveys.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these areas: communication and literacy, physical development and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited classrooms, and spoke to teachers. Given that almost all pupils are non-verbal, it was not possible to talk directly to them about their work or their well-being. In order to gather evidence, inspectors communicated with pupils through staff members using symbols or yes/no questions, and they observed pupils' responses to learning very closely. Inspectors also considered the school's provision in other areas of learning.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding records and documents, including the single central record. They also met with the designated leader to review records showing how the school's procedures work.

Inspection team

Linda Jacobs, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Louise Ling

Ofsted Inspector

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