

Inspection of Okehampton College

Mill Road, Okehampton, Devon EX20 1PW

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Okehampton College as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Recently, the school has experienced many changes of leadership. This has led to pupils and parents feeling a lack of confidence. The new headteacher is ambitious to rebuild trust. He has started to make improvements. However, they need time to embed.

Behaviour is a concern for pupils and parents. Leaders have raised the expectations for behaviour. This has led to fewer incidents, although low-level disruptive behaviours in some classrooms continue. A small number of pupils show disregard for leaders. However, this number is reducing. Staff do not demonstrate consistently high expectations for all pupils. This leads to some pupils feeling there is a lack of warmth for them. They feel that they are not helped enough.

Pupils have an adult they can speak to if they have a concern. Leaders take a strong approach to dealing with bullying and derogatory language, especially racism and homophobia. However, some pupils are reluctant to report it when it happens.

Students in the sixth form enjoy their courses. They feel well supported. Pupils develop leadership skills through workshops, such as 'Humantopia'. This enables older pupils to mentor and support younger pupils. Pupils are enthusiastic about these experiences, even though they have only recently been introduced.

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

Leaders have planned a broad and carefully sequenced curriculum. They have identified the knowledge they want pupils to learn and when. However, the implementation of the curriculum is inconsistent. Teachers deliver the content but they do not check pupils' understanding effectively, and so they are not clear how well pupils know it. As a result, many pupils do not recall their learning and fall behind. Students in the sixth form study subjects that lead to the future pathways they wish to pursue. In some subjects, the content is not delivered in a way that helps them to recall their learning well.

Teachers do not set consistently high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Many pupils are positive about their learning, but a significant minority are not. Some pupils who choose not to work are not challenged. Poor and incomplete class work is not followed up. As a result, these pupils do not build up a record of learning, and this hinders them from learning new knowledge. When this happens, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are especially affected. They do not receive the level of support that they should.

Teachers know the needs of pupils with SEND. They receive the information they need but some of this is not specific enough. Interventions planned to support pupils are not always accurately matched to need. New leaders have identified these issues and are starting to fix them.

Pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read receive the support they need. Leaders ensure that they learn a phonics reading programme to secure their reading. They have introduced a tutor time reading programme to introduce pupils to a diverse range of novels.

Delivered through calendared days, leaders plan a programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) for pupils to learn. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, sex education and consent. This approach does not ensure that they learn the content in a timely way. Leaders plan workshops to enhance pupils' understanding, although their relevance is not always understood.

Students in the sixth form receive thoughtful career guidance to help them make decisions for their next steps. However, they can opt out of the personal development programme. Therefore, not all students benefit from the planned learning. Pupils learn about careers through the PSHE programme. They attend a careers fair with other schools in the trust but, many pupils have not received appropriate careers guidance. Leaders plan a limited range of clubs and trips. Pupils have few high-quality enrichment opportunities. Leaders do not prepare pupils for the future well enough.

Working with colleagues across the trust, leaders plan professional development for middle leaders and subject teachers. Teachers are enthusiastic about this work. Leaders have introduced many actions to raise expectations and improve the experience of school for pupils. Some of these actions are starting to make things better. The culture of the school is growing in positivity. However, leaders at every level do not check carefully enough if their actions are bringing about the pace of improvement that is required.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure there are clear systems for reporting concerns. They work with external reviewers to ensure practices are well understood. Staff receive appropriate training. This means staff know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Leaders act promptly to keep pupils safe. This includes collaborating with external agencies to provide support to pupils and their families.

Most pupils feel safe at school. Leaders identify the areas in school that are busy. They focus on improving the climate there. Leaders provide ways for pupils to report concerns. However, some pupils can be reluctant to use them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not carefully monitor and evaluate many of the actions they implement. As a result, they do not know the quality or impact of their work. This means they do not know what they need to do next to bring about effective and swift improvement. Leaders at all levels must monitor and evaluate their work thoroughly so they can adapt and act quickly to ensure it is effective.
- Not enough pupils receive a high-quality set of experiences beyond the academic. This includes careers education. As a result, this limits their opportunities to develop their interests. They are not well prepared for their next steps. Leaders need to ensure the careers and wider personal development experiences are well planned and far reaching.
- Staff do not maintain high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve in lessons. When pupils opt out of their learning or produce poor-quality work, this can go unchallenged. Staff need to raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve, including pupils with SEND.
- Teachers do not implement the curriculum effectively across many subjects. This means that pupils do not recall and retain their learning. Leaders need to make sure the quality of the curriculum is consistent so that pupils can sustain their learning over time.

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	145337
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10260490
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	1300
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	133
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tania Skeaping
Principal	Andrew Sweeney
Website	www.okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Okehampton College is part of the Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school joined the trust in January 2018. Its predecessor school was graded outstanding at its inspection in January 2014.
- In the last three years, the school has had four headteachers. The current headteacher took up post in September 2022.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision and 10 unregistered alternative providers.
- The school does not meet the requirements of the provider access legislation which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about improved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with leaders at all levels. Inspectors also met with trustees, members of the local stakeholder board and the chief executive of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, religious education, physical education and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of work.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and reviewed plans that support pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead inspector examined school records. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke to a sample of the alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parental communications, as well as the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Rachel Hesketh, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Favager-Dalton	His Majesty's Inspector
Sandy Hayes	His Majesty's Inspector
Sara Berry	His Majesty's Inspector
Paul Williams	His Majesty's Inspector

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