

Inspection of Birmingham Ormiston Academy

1 Grosvenor Street, Birmingham, West Midlands B4 7QD

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at Birmingham Ormiston Academy (BOA). The school aims to allow all pupils to develop their talents. This is successful because leaders have created an effective and broad curriculum, alongside high-quality pastoral care. Within the core curriculum, the school has a focus on its high-quality arts provision, supporting pupils along dedicated pathways at key stages 4 and 5. Through well-developed industry links and an extensive enrichment programme, the school is successful in its vision to 'unlock each pupil's potential'. As one pupil said to inspectors, 'I have done things I have never done before at BOA.' High expectations for a high proportion of pupils are realised. Pupils support each other in their endeavours and work harmoniously towards ambitious curriculum goals.

Pupils are happy at BOA thanks to the tolerant and inclusive ethos which leaders have established. As another pupil said to inspectors, 'Everyone is allowed to be who they want to be.' Pupils behave exceptionally well, and demonstrate care and respect for each other, and for visitors. Inspectors agreed that this is a strength of the school.

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

Leaders have developed a highly ambitious, well-designed curriculum. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils know and can do. They provide personalised support, where needed, so that all pupils can succeed with their learning. Teachers also have high levels of subject expertise and deliver key knowledge well. They address pupils' misconceptions, which helps them to build successfully on previous learning. However, on occasion, teachers do not check well enough if pupils have retained the key knowledge they need to progress through the curriculum. This means some pupils find difficulties with more demanding work. Much more typically, teachers revisit knowledge, check understanding and help pupils make links in their learning. This is especially strong in the sixth form. For example, in musical theatre, pupils develop their understanding of the genre through a well-sequenced curriculum including elements of dance, acting and singing. This enables pupils to become effective independent practitioners over time. A culture of reading is highly developed through opportunities such as the BOA Book Award scheme, and through book swap opportunities.

Leaders see the wider development of pupils as integral to their curriculum to prepare pupils for their next steps. Pupils develop confidence and resilience through carefully planned enrichment opportunities which represent exemplary practice. Pupils relish the wide range of opportunities available to them, including the Friday programme of activities. Careers information and guidance is strong throughout the school. Information for sixth-form students helps to prepare them for learning at university, in the workplace, in the performing arts and also in a range of other destinations. Students appreciate this personalised approach.

The provision and help for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are excellent. Staff are very well trained and provide highly effective support in class for pupils with SEND. Teachers are aware of the agreed strategies in place for each pupil, and use them effectively. Support is tailored to each pupil and is regularly monitored and reviewed. Pupils with SEND make very good progress.

Pupils are highly respectful of each other, and tolerance of difference and mutual support are hallmarks of the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are exceptionally positive, which leads to exceedingly strong attitudes to learning. Staff manage behaviour consistently. Attendance is improving from a high base, and leaders maintain an intelligent and effective approach to sustaining this, given the significant distance that so many pupils live from the school. Many parents told inspectors that the school's ethos and the support pupils receive are significantly valued.

Many governors are new in post, but they are aware of the school's aims, and have a general understanding of the strengths. They provide appropriate challenge to leaders. Governors are working to refine their practice further through link governors and external validation of the school's work. They have taken action to remodel the leadership structure in the school. Leaders are mindful of staff's workload and have already taken action to consult on changes, which staff have welcomed. Many leaders are new in post and as such are refining their approach to quality assurance. They are conscious that they need a more evaluative analysis of the impact of their work to provide clarity for future developments. Staff are loyal to the school and are committed to its wider aims.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are aware of the significant distances that pupils live from the school, and have adapted their approaches to safeguarding accordingly. This includes extensive liaison with parents or carers to put support in place quickly, including from external agencies, to help pupils at risk. Staff receive clear and timely training. They identify and pass on concerns promptly. Leaders ensure that adults in the school have a good understanding of local safeguarding risks, which includes the distances travelled by pupils each day to attend school. They work extensively with pastoral leads to ensure pupils have the information they need to keep themselves safe.

Leaders carry out checks on the suitability of staff working with pupils. The school is working towards consolidating its safeguarding notes into a single record. Although no pupil is at risk of harm, leaders are aware that this needs further work to ensure all records are stored coherently and can be retrieved in a timely manner.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not always systematically quality assure all aspects of the school's provision with a high level of precision. This means that they are not clear about the full impact of their actions. Leaders need to ensure they have the information to be able to evaluate the impact of their work so they can precisely plan for future developments.
- On occasion, teachers do not use assessment well enough to identify and address pupils' gaps in learning. As a result, gaps in some pupils' learning persist. Leaders should ensure that all teachers precisely identify and then address any misconceptions and gaps in pupils' learning to enable them to build successfully on their learning.

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	136944
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10227735
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	976
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	630
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Philip Thickett
Principal	Alistair Chattaway
Website	http://www.boa-academy.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new principal was appointed in June 2020.
- The school receives external support from the BOA Trust.
- The school specialises in creative, digital and performing arts, and selects pupils by aptitude.
- The school does not make use of any registered or unregistered providers.
- The most recent section 8 inspection took place in March 2017.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved 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.
- Inspectors met with the principal, the CEO and other senior leaders. They met with representatives of the academy trust, the local governing body and the sponsor trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, acting, musical theatre and dance.
- 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 reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals. They met with leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. They looked at the single central record and reviewed safeguarding documentation, practices and procedures. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors looked at policies provided by the school. They studied curriculum documentation, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination statistics.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders responsible for SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the support for pupils with additional needs.
- Inspectors conducted a learning walk to evaluate the support received by pupils with SEND in lessons.
- Inspectors visited a number of tutor periods.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and considered the responses of the pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including the comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility.

Inspection team

Andrew Madden, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Gwen Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Guy Shears	Ofsted Inspector
Emma Gater	His Majesty's Inspector

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