

Inspection of a good school: Ormiston Rivers Academy

Southminster Road, Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex CM0 8QB

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 June 2023

Outcome

Ormiston Rivers Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy attending Ormiston Rivers Academy. They access a wide range of opportunities to develop their confidence, resilience and leadership skills. There are a range of clubs, trips and events which help pupils learn about the wider world, such as a visit to the Globe Theatre. Pupils are regularly consulted about their views on the school.

Pupils say that they usually feel safe at this school. They report that if bullying happens, teachers deal with it, and it stops. Most pupils behave well and treat others with respect. However, they are frustrated that a minority of pupils sometimes disrupt their learning. This happens more often when lessons are not taught by a permanent teacher.

Teachers usually have high expectations of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils follow a broad curriculum throughout the school. As part of this, they learn about other cultures and lifestyles. They have a wide choice of academic and vocational courses in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. They learn about a range of careers, further and higher education, and apprenticeships. This provides them with the knowledge needed to prepare them for the next stage in their education or employment.

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

Leaders have thought carefully about the curriculum. They have identified the knowledge pupils need to learn. Pupils' learning is regularly revisited so teachers know when is best to move on to new learning. In most cases, teachers accurately identify gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly and adapt their teaching to build on what they know. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to model how to approach tasks. They provide high-quality feedback which pupils use to improve their work. However, there are occasions when some teachers do not do this as well. When this happens, pupils are not clear what they need to do to improve.

Reading has been prioritised. Leaders understand the importance of pupils being able to read so that they can access the rest of the curriculum effectively. Pupils read regularly in form time, with an increasingly diverse range of texts, and have access to a new library. Weaker readers are quickly identified. Well-trained staff support pupils to catch up in additional sessions. This helps pupils improve their fluency and comprehension.

Pupils with SEND are well supported. Teachers identify their needs accurately and adapt their teaching to ensure that pupils can access the same curriculum as others. While leaders are working hard to improve the attendance and motivation of disadvantaged pupils, leaders know this will take time and this is at an early stage of development.

Similarly, to the rest of the school, students in the sixth form follow a well-designed curriculum, and are well prepared for their next steps. Students learn how to study independently. They do work experience and learn about topics such as student finance in preparation for university. This contributes towards them being well prepared for their next steps.

Leaders identified behaviour early on as a priority to get right. They have reviewed behaviour management throughout the school. Consequently, leaders have successfully reduced incidents of more challenging behaviour. Staff understand and apply the agreed systems and high expectations are applied increasingly consistently. The majority of pupils are engaged and positive about their learning. If there are instances where pupils repeatedly do not follow expectations, these are dealt with swiftly to ensure that learning is not as regularly disrupted. There are occasions, in most instances when temporary staff are in place, when pupils challenge expectations. Leaders are aware of this and routinely check that pupils' learning is not affected by a small minority of pupils.

Pupils follow a well-thought-out personal, social and health education curriculum. They learn about topics such as elections and democracy, relationships and keeping themselves physically and mentally healthy. They learn about current events in form time. Careers education and guidance is highly comprehensive. Pupils learn about the world of work by meeting employers and higher education providers at events such as careers fairs.

Staff say that leaders support them with their well-being and workload.

Governors check what they are told by leaders. Governors, and the trust, support and challenge leaders to make the school the best it can be. Staff benefit from training from the trust. They provide support with areas such as curriculum planning. Leaders are aware that there is work to be done to restore the confidence of parents and carers after changes in leadership in school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders work closely with local services to provide support for pupils who need it. They check on pupils' well-being and provide them with support related to their needs. Staff are given up-to-date training on identifying and managing issues.

Leaders carry out robust checks on all staff who work with pupils. Governors regularly monitor how effectively the school keeps pupils safe.

Pupils know how to report concerns. They learn how to keep safe from organisations such as the police and fire services, and learn how to keep themselves safe locally, including near water and on the railways.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While many teachers check pupils' knowledge effectively and use this to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs, on occasions some teachers do not do this well enough. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress that they should. Leaders should share good practice within school and provide training to ensure that all teachers consistently check knowledge and adapt work accordingly to ensure that pupils achieve consistently well in all areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders have high expectations of behaviour, but some teachers do not routinely apply the agreed processes to ensure that they manage any disruption in lessons effectively. As a result, there are a few pupils who sometimes disrupt learning. This is particularly an issue when staff are not employed permanently by the school. Leaders should ensure that all staff follow the agreed systems in place and are provided with training and support to ensure that behaviour is consistently well managed.
- As a result of changes in leadership and staffing difficulties, some parents have lost trust and confidence in the school. Leaders have begun to improve communication with parents to build parental engagement. Leaders should review the impact of strategies used to improve the confidence and engagement of parents.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 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

Unique reference number	137152
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10200098
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1,151
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	156
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Julius Weinberg
Principal	Joanne Williams
Website	www.ormistonriversacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 September 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Ormiston Rivers Academy is a member of the Ormiston Academies Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider. An on-site provision, The Bridge, is run by the school. This provides support for pupils to improve their behaviour.
- The principal and two vice-principals joined the school in September 2021.
- 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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID 19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, curriculum leaders, and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in five subjects: English, mathematics, history, drama and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met 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.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the trust and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors met with leaders and reviewed school documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector considered the 269 responses and 268 free-text responses received during the inspection to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. He also considered the 57 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 91 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

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