

Inspection of The Oxford Academy

Sandy Lane West, Littlemore, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX4 6JZ

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Nora Ward. This school is part of River Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paul James, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kirsten Robinson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Over recent years, leaders' actions have started a positive transformation at the school. Pupils now feel safe and value the care shown to them by staff. Sixth formers especially are very proud of their school. However, the school knows there is more to be done to fully embed its improvement work.

The school's new curriculum is aspirational and appropriate for all. The quality of teaching is developing, and staff are well supported by the school and the trust. However, teaching does not yet support all pupils to achieve highly enough, including some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). That said, curriculum work is more embedded in the sixth form, where students learn more effectively.

The school has raised expectations of behaviour. Pupils and staff acknowledge things are improving. On the whole, pupils behave well in lessons and conduct in social time is generally orderly. However, pupils are heavily supervised. It is not yet the norm for pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour. For example, pupils' use of mobile phones and derogatory language, or 'banter', are still too common. Sixth-form students are excellent role models, however. Indeed, many volunteer to help supervise during breaks.

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

The curriculum offer is aspirational for all. Most pupils with SEND study alongside their peers. The school identifies pupils' individual needs and how teachers can help them. Many teachers value this information and use it in lessons. Where appropriate, the school provides alternative programmes. The 'enhanced key stage 3 pathway' successfully prepares its pupils to transfer to the main curriculum from Year 9. The new 'foundation' programme in Year 12 prepares students for future A-level or vocational study.

Most teachers create calm and orderly classrooms and pupils generally complete what is asked of them. However, pupils do not yet achieve as highly as they could, including pupils with SEND. Subject teams have identified what pupils must know at each point. They have been less clear how this knowledge connects so that pupils can apply it successfully. Consequently, teaching is not always effective. Most teachers check that pupils can remember what they have been taught. However, they do not routinely check for understanding. This means they often move on before learning is embedded and feedback is not as helpful as it could be. In the sixth form, teaching is more effective. Typically, students remember and can apply what they have learned to different types of problems.

The school's reading strategy is well considered, but new. Where pupils cannot yet read fluently, the school has identified their needs. The school has appropriate support programmes available, but these have not yet been rolled out fully. The

tutor reading programme is also in its early stages. However, there is evidence of positive impact in Years 7 and 8.

Routines and systems to support behaviour management are having a positive impact generally and staff use them increasingly consistently. The school recognises that some pupils struggle to meet expectations. The expanded behaviour and inclusion team provides appropriate support. The school's chaplaincy contributes significantly to inclusion work. However, some pupils perceive the adjustments made in some cases as unfair, especially when they feel that they are themselves trying to meet expectations independently. Nevertheless, punctuality to lessons and attendance is improving, and the number of serious incidents and suspensions is starting to fall.

The school's personal development programme is thorough. It covers required content, such as consent and equality, as well as local issues, such as knife crime. However, the delivery is not as effective as it could be. For example, pupils do not routinely discuss and debate themes in depth or have opportunities to explore taking responsibility. The school offers a range of extra-curricular activities, but participation is low in Years 7 to 11. On the other hand, sixth-form students enjoy giving back to their school through numerous leadership opportunities. All pupils follow a well-considered careers programme which is supported by local employers. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

The school's capacity for improvement has increased significantly since joining the trust. Robust plans are in place to continue transforming the school. The trust provides strong support and challenge to school leaders. The trust also discharges its statutory duties diligently, not least regarding safeguarding. Leaders strive to engage the local community with the school. They listen to parents and keep them informed of decisions and improvement work. The school is mindful of staff workload and well-being. It provides high-quality training and support. Staff recognise this and they feel valued and respected.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's actions to develop the curriculum are not fully embedded, particularly in terms of the delivery in key stages 3 and 4. As a result, too many pupils, including those with additional needs, do not have the secure knowledge and understanding that they need to achieve well. The school should continue to support staff so that practice across the school is consistently strong, and all pupils achieve highly.

- The school's new reading strategy has not been fully rolled out. Consequently, pupils do not yet read widely enough, and those who cannot read fluently are not supported to catch up. The school should ensure that its strategy is fully embedded as quickly as possible.
- The school has raised expectations of behaviour and there have been improvements since the last inspection. However, poor behaviour is still not consistently addressed by staff. The school should continue to provide staff with the support they need so that approaches are implemented consistently in and out of lessons.
- The school's work to help all pupils to develop a positive attitude to school life is not yet embedded. As a result, it is not yet typical school culture for all pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour, including how they speak to, and about, others. The school should continue to provide more clear and meaningful opportunities for pupils to demonstrate these.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	148354
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10288106
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1174
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	141
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kirsten Robinson
CEO of trust	Paul James
Headteacher	Nora Ward
Website	www.theoxfordacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the River Learning Trust in November 2020.
- The school currently uses two registered and four unregistered alternative providers.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Oxford. A Section 48 inspection is scheduled for 2023-2024.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation. The legislation 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with trust and school leaders, members of staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector also met with representatives of the trust board, the local governing body and the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work from all key stages. Inspectors also looked at key stage 4 lessons in a range of subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils to gather their views. They considered parents' and carers' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also took account of responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Mary Davies, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Johnson	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Serridge	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Middleton	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Gibson	Ofsted Inspector

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