

Inspection of Oxford Spires Academy

Glanville Road, Oxford OX4 2AU

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The principal of this school is Louise Cowley. This school is part of Anthem Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mohsen Ojja, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jay Bhutani, who is responsible for this school and 15 others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Oxford Spires Academy is a highly inclusive school and pupils describe it as a 'beautiful community'. The school environment is aspirational and supportive, and pupils are happy to attend. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are fully immersed in the same learning and enrichment activities as their peers. The school holds high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and pupils live up to these.

The school has ensured that pupils study an ambitious and enriching curriculum that is well suited to their needs and prepares them well for their next steps. Pupils, and particularly those who speak English as an additional language, achieve very well. Pupils know that all adults have high expectations of them.

Leaders make sure that pupils' well-being and safety are given top priority. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils live up to these expectations and conduct themselves respectfully. Routines are clearly understood and followed. The school works well with external agencies to give families any support that they might need. Pupils in Year 7 talk about how well they have been supported to settle in to the school.

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

The curriculum is very well designed. The school has identified precisely the important things that pupils need to know. Teachers present new learning clearly and focus carefully on the important knowledge that pupils must gain. The school provides targeted training to help staff in their roles. As a result, teachers' pedagogy and subject knowledge is a strength which means that pupils learn effectively.

Teachers use assessments accurately to check what pupils remember and understand. Bespoke 'scholar guides' set out the curriculum for pupils so that they understand what has, what is and what will be taught. This helps them make important connections across the curriculum. Teachers are skilled at adapting their teaching to address any misconceptions. The regular 'super teaching' weeks help pupils to revisit learning and correct any misunderstandings.

Students in the sixth form follow a carefully planned and highly ambitious curriculum, studying a range of subjects in depth. Leaders have correctly identified issues that have led to students' underperformance in the past and are working increasingly well to establish high expectations. Students value the strong support they receive that prepares them well for the next stage of their education, employment, or training.

Teachers know their subjects well. They explain learning clearly, choosing activities that help pupils to deepen their understanding. Teachers adapt their teaching expertly to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Where required, pupils benefit from

a calm learning environment outside of lessons. Here, they receive specific support aimed at helping them learn. The school has also developed strategies to support pupils who are not confident readers. As a result, pupils with SEND access the school's ambitious curriculum, achieve well and in line with their peers.

The school's approach to securing strong attendance and punctuality are very well considered and monitored. Pupils are keen to attend school and learn new things alongside their friends. Disadvantaged pupils do not always attend school regularly. This means that too many miss out on vital learning and the rich wider opportunities that the school provides.

The school environment is energetic and orderly. Staff deal with any low-level disruption very well. The school carefully considers the education of the whole child. There is an impressive personal development programme. This enables pupils to develop their character as well as their skills and interests. Pupils are taught about healthy relationships, managing risk and ways to stay mentally and physically healthy. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life after school. There are a wide range of enrichment opportunities on offer, which the majority of pupils participate in.

Leaders have an accurate view of the school. They are focused on what is working well and areas that need further development. Trustees maintain effective strategic oversight of the school's work. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities very well. The trust supports and challenges school leaders appropriately. Staff speak highly of the way that leaders consider their workloads when making decisions. Teachers new to the profession feel very well supported at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The wider support for students in the Sixth Form is too varied. This means that while students do learn effectively, they could do even better. The school should ensure that support for students is more consistent.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not attend as well as they could. Consequently, they do not always remember their learning sufficiently or benefit fully from the rich wider personal development opportunities offered by school. The school must ensure that disadvantaged pupils' attendance improves so that they can increase their achievement and take up the opportunities offered by the school.

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	136261
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10256410
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	1345
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	215
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jay Bhutani
CEO	Mohsen Ojja
Principal	Louise Cowley
Website	www.oxfordspiresacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	28 November 2017

Information about this school

- This school is part of Anthem Schools Trust.
- This school currently uses three registered and two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8-13 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 carried out deep dives in English, science, art, computing and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector/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.
- The lead inspector held an online meeting with Trustees include the chair of the board. She held a separate meeting with the Trust CEO and Director of Education.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents through their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' free-text comments. Inspectors also talked with parents on the morning of the first day of the inspection.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views through meetings, visits to lessons and discussions at other times of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of staff's views during meetings with them and through their responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

Ginny Rhodes, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Taj Bhambra	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Mortimore	Ofsted Inspector
Jason Philipsz	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Fry	Ofsted Inspector

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