

Inspection of an outstanding school: Oakwood Academy

Chatsworth Road, Ellesmere Park, Eccles, Manchester M30 9DY

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 January 2024

Outcome

Oakwood Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is Lisa Southwood. This school is part of the Kings Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Amanda Nicholson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Laurence Cooper.

What is it like to attend this school?

Oakwood Academy is an exceptionally nurturing community. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are expertly guided to overcome their barriers to learning. Pupils love coming to school and are happy here. They embrace the many opportunities within school. Pupils flourish academically, personally and socially.

The ambitious curriculum encompasses a broad range of subjects and inspires pupils to develop their unique talents and interests. The school holds very high expectations of pupils' achievement, including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision). Pupils learn well across the curriculum. They receive a well-rounded education that prepares them exceptionally well for their future lives. For example, students in the sixth form develop their communication and social skills while selling goods in the school's community shop.

The school fosters highly positive relationships with pupils. Staff care for pupils deeply. Pupils are kind to each other and demonstrate remarkable behaviour during lessons. They have commendable attitudes towards their learning.

The curriculum is enriched through an array of clubs and activities, including sports, crafts, music and computing, creating a vibrant school life. The school organises a range of trips and visits to theatres, museums and outdoor education centres that are closely linked to subject curriculums. Pupils enjoy participating in subject competitions and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. These activities help to build their confidence, independence and resilience.

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

The school, together with the local governing body and the trust, has crafted a highly ambitious and stimulating curriculum. The curriculum is adeptly tailored to meet the individual needs of pupils, incorporating important information from their education, health and care plans (EHC plan). Pupils follow bespoke pathways that help to improve their speech, language and communication needs. At key stage 4 and in the sixth form, pupils study a wide range of academic and vocational qualifications. They achieve highly.

Subject curriculums are carefully designed. They set out clearly the knowledge that pupils should learn. Pupils are taught topics in a logical order. Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to revisit prior learning. This helps pupils to build their understanding in many subjects. The school makes sure that pupils in the specially resourced provision receive the specialist support that they need.

Teachers use assessment strategies effectively to gauge pupils' understanding and to identify any misconceptions that they may have. Pupils make substantial gains in their knowledge over their time at the school.

The school promotes a love of reading. Pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read, or who are developing their pre-reading skills, receive highly effective support from skilled staff. This continues for as long as required. This helps these pupils to catch up quickly. Pupils benefit from frequent and structured opportunities to develop fluency and confidence in their reading. They are exposed to a rich and diverse range of literature.

Pupils quickly gain a sense of belonging and stability as a result of the encouragement and support provided by a dedicated and well-trained team of education and therapy staff. This fosters a positive learning environment where pupils exhibit high levels of enjoyment and interest in their work.

There is a harmonious atmosphere in school. Pupils are highly respectful and caring towards others. They move calmly around the school during lesson changeovers and settle quickly into their lessons. The school employs a variety of effective strategies that support pupils to attend regularly.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development. Pupils have a strong voice. Staff listen to their aspirations, concerns and wishes. Pupils enjoy participating in the school council. They learn about important topics, such as democracy and finance. Pupils receive age-appropriate relationships and sex education and health education. The school has a proactive stance on mental health. For example, in the sixth form, students have mindfulness and yoga sessions. Pupils find out about other faiths and cultures, equality and diversity. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

Pupils receive high-quality and impartial careers guidance. They benefit from opportunities to participate in extensive work-related learning experiences. Almost all pupils successfully move on to education, employment or training, including apprenticeships.

Staff well-being and morale are high. They are proud to work at the school. Staff spoke very positively of the efforts that the school makes to help them to manage their workload. For example, the school provides staff with sufficient time and training during periods of change.

The local governing body and the trust demonstrate highly effective and unwavering commitment to the school's success. They have a very secure understanding of the school and use their diverse skills to provide exceptional support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in November 2017.

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	138130
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10256243
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	330
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	64
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Laurence Cooper
CEO of trust	Amanda Nicholson
Headteacher	Lisa Southwood
Website	www.oakwoodacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This academy school is part of the Kings Academy Trust.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. The majority of pupils have moderate learning difficulties or speech, language and communication needs.
- The school provides education for pupils from Years 5 to 13.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2021.
- The school operates from three separate sites. The main site offers provision for key stages 3 and 4. It is located at Chatsworth Road, Ellesmere Park, Eccles, Manchester, M30 9DY. The Willows Primary Provision caters for pupils in upper key stage 2. It is located at 55A Silver Street, Irlam, Manchester, M44 6HT. Oakwood Academy Sixth Form College caters for students in key stage 5. It is located in a separate part of

AldridgeUTC@MediaCityUK, 100 to 102 Broadway, Salford, M502UW.

- The school hosts a specially resourced provision, on behalf of the local authority, for up to 18 pupils in key stages 3 and 4. The specially resourced provision exists on the main site. The designated special educational need is autism.
- The school makes use of five unregistered alternative providers for a small number of older pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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 spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- Inspectors visited all three of the school's sites.
- Inspectors spoke with the director of education and the CEO of the trust, the chair of the trust board and representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors. An inspector held a telephone conversation with representatives of the local authority and of an alternative provider.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences in school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of trustee and local governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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 carried out deep dives in English, including reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector observed some younger pupils read to familiar staff.
- Inspectors met with subject leaders to review other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jane Dennis

His Majesty's Inspector

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