

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Iffley Academy

Iffley Turn, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX4 4DU

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 July 2024

Outcome

The Iffley Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is Yvette Fay. This school is part of The Gallery 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), Kay Willett MBE, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Chris Scrivener.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are immensely proud of their school. They feel valued and accepted for who they are in this highly nurturing place. Pupils settle quickly into school life because adults take the time to know their individual special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff go the extra mile to ensure that pupils make excellent progress academically, socially and emotionally. This includes the high proportion of disadvantaged pupils. There is an inherent culture of high expectations. Consequently, pupils achieve highly from their individual starting points.

Pupils feel safe and are extremely well cared for. They rarely fall out and make strong, lasting friendships. This is because adults expertly help pupils to understand each other's points of view through the 'mend it' conversations. Older students are supported to become increasingly independent as they start to prepare for adult life. For example, by learning to manage money, running the 'Life Skills Cafe' and travelling on public transport. Pupils thoroughly enjoy participating in Duke of Edinburgh expeditions.

Pupils heartily participate in the myriad of 'star time' activities, which encourage them to pursue their interests. They discover new hobbies, such as gardening, computing, chess and drama. Visits to The City Farm, The Oxford Botanic Garden and The Story Museum enrich pupils' social and cultural experiences.

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

The school's curriculum is highly aspirational. It pays close attention to each pupil's education, health and care plans (EHC plan) targets and starting points. The curriculum in all subjects is expertly wrapped around pupils' individual learning needs. Consequently,

pupils benefit from a highly personalised and tailored curriculum, which meets their specific pastoral and academic needs successfully. In the sixth form, students benefit from a highly effective academic and vocational curriculum, which prepares them exceptionally well for routes into employment and adulthood. Students leave with valuable qualifications that help them to pursue the next stage of their career and education.

Staff receive top class training. The school considers the latest research in learning and behaviour in relation to pupils' SEND needs. Staff have expert subject knowledge and keep a firm focus on the intended purpose of all activities. They reinforce pupils' EHC plan targets extremely effectively, giving precise and highly encouraging feedback. Typically, staff provide clear explanations and use relevant examples so that pupils embed the important knowledge and technical vocabulary securely. Pupils' palpable joy in the progress they make through the curriculum is reflected in their thoughtful and insightful answers to the questions staff ask of them. This enables them to make purposeful links in their work and staff skilfully help pupils to connect their learning across different subjects. Consequently, pupils achieve highly from their individual starting points.

A love of reading pervades in all areas. Often, pupils have fallen behind in their reading before joining the school. Staff carefully check pupils' reading ability when they first arrive. They work in partnership with parents from the start to successfully support pupils' education and promote their love of reading. The superbly considered phonics programme helps those pupils who struggle to read. Highly knowledgeable staff provide timely interventions, which help pupils to catch up quickly. One Year 7 pupil said, 'I always struggled with reading but as soon as I joined school, staff helped me learn my sounds confidently. Now, I read lots of different books and I am enjoying life fully.'

Staff help pupils to manage their feelings and emotions exceptionally well. There is a highly purposeful and peaceful atmosphere in classrooms and around the school. Pupils use helpful strategies, such as yoga, mindfulness and breathing techniques, which help them to manage their behaviour. They have high rates of attendance and start each new day positively and enthusiastically. Around school, pupils share a warm smile with their friends and staff as they go about their day.

Pupils' personal development is first rate. The school has an excellent approach to ensure that pupils learn the important content they need to know at the right time. For example, how to keep themselves safe in different situations and what makes a healthy relationship. Charity work and volunteering in the community helps to instil the importance of helping others. Pupils are taught about different faiths and cultures. They are extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils benefit from high-quality careers advice and guidance. Staff support pupils highly effectively when applying for college or apprenticeships and often accompany them on visits to ensure a very successful transition.

Staff are conscientious and morale is sky high. They greatly value that the school is considerate of their workload. A committed and highly skilled board of trustees supports the school very well. They ask thoughtful, challenging questions of school leaders, which ensure that this uniquely exceptional school never stands still.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in December 2014.

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](#). 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	139312
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10321966
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	182
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	37
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Chris Scrivener
CEO of the trust	Kay Willett MBE
Headteacher	Yvette Fay
Website	www.iffleyacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Iffley Academy is a special school for pupils between the ages of 11 and 18. All pupils have an EHC plan to support their moderate learning difficulties. Pupils often have additional learning difficulties, including autism and social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils have missed significant amounts of time in education prior to joining the school.
- The Iffley Academy is part of The Gallery Trust, which currently has seven special schools in its Trust.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2023. The deputy headteacher joined the school in April 2024.
- The school is currently using three unregistered alternative providers.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, they 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. The lead inspector also looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with two trustees, including the chair and the vice chair of the local governing body. She also met with the CEO of the trust. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with senior staff from two of the unregistered providers of alternative education and the headteacher of the virtual school.
- The inspectors gathered evidence to explore the school's wider development offer, and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed in Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. They considered the views of staff during meetings with them and through the staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Felix Rayner

Ofsted Inspector

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