

Inspection of E-ACT Ousedale School

The Grove, Newport Pagnell, Buckinghamshire MK16 0BJ

Inspection dates:	21 and 22 January 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The principal of this school is Paul McFadden. This school is part of E-ACT multi-academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Tom Campbell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Lord Jim Knight.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including those in the sixth form, attend a happy, respectful and inclusive school. They proudly embody the school's vision of 'be kind, work hard, succeed together'. There are warm, positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils know that staff want them to grow up to be well-rounded individuals who achieve highly in all they choose to do.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' academic and personal achievement. Many pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve extremely highly across a broad range of subjects. The school, supported well by E-ACT multi-academy trust, is working to improve outcomes still further.

Pupils attend school very regularly, and their behaviour is typically polite, calm and focused. This is evident throughout the school, but most especially in the sixth form. Pupils feel safe and listened to. They are confident that on the rare occasion there is any poor or unkind behaviour, it is swiftly dealt with.

Pupils are active citizens. They value the various opportunities to develop leadership qualities. Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular experiences, including trips abroad and visits to local care homes. The various popular choirs, orchestras and ensembles are at the heart of the vibrant atmosphere in the school.

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

Pupils, including in the sixth form, typically learn very well across a broad range of subjects. Staff are experts in their subjects. Each subject's curriculum is designed so that pupils learn new knowledge in a logical order. In nearly all subjects, pupils' learning is checked systematically and learning is adapted to address any gaps in knowledge. As a result, pupils build their knowledge over time and typically achieve very well. Geography and music are particular strengths of the school.

In most subjects, the curriculum is implemented consistently and effectively. However, occasionally, the curriculum in a couple of subjects is not routinely delivered as intended, and sometimes learning moves on before pupils have embedded their knowledge securely. The school, along with experts from within the multi-academy trust, is providing useful help to support staff to pinpoint pupils' gaps in learning and ensure that these are filled.

Since the last inspection, published outcomes show that the proportion of pupils who enter the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects at GCSE has been low. As a result of some curriculum reorganisation, the proportion of pupils currently studying the EBacc at GCSE is rising.

Provision for the most vulnerable pupils is well thought through. Teachers adapt learning to meet pupils' different needs. Extra-curricular clubs are designed with pupils' particular needs in mind. For example, the 'Dungeons and Dragons' club helps pupils to develop

their social and communication skills. Pupils benefit from a raft of support to help maintain their mental well-being.

Pupils' personal development is exceptional and central to the ethos of the school. The school's dedication to helping pupils to develop their talents in music and drama is highly regarded. Pupils and staff are proud that so many pupils get involved in the hugely successful and popular annual productions. Pupils also have numerous opportunities to develop their leadership skills, including by supporting younger pupils with their learning. Pupils gain a strong understanding of the world around them through a well-designed personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. This helps them to understand risks and how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils value how everyone is unique. For example, the pupil-led 'Alphabet Soup' club confidently promotes equalities and challenges inequality. Students in the sixth form are articulate. They take up opportunities to join in with debates in school and in the local area, including when they represent the school at the Milton Keynes Youth Council.

Careers education is extremely well organised, providing bespoke help and advice for pupils. It helps pupils to consider how to follow their interests and talents and how these can help them have happy and fulfilling future careers. As a result, there are positive destinations for pupils, including those who do not choose to stay on in the school's own sixth form. Pupils who leave at the end of Year 13 typically go on to attend well-considered university placements, degree apprenticeships or conservatoire placements.

Leaders at all levels, including those who are part of the leadership of the multi-academy trust, are extremely knowledgeable about the school. Collectively, they work strategically and with precision to address any areas that they want to be even better. Staff work very well together because they are all dedicated to ensuring that every pupil is cared for and achieves the best possible outcomes across their education.

Staff feel very well supported by the highly effective training they receive and the careful attention the trust pays to their workload and well-being. Staff are particularly positive about how smooth the transition to joining the multi-academy trust has been.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a very small number of subjects, sometimes teaching does not sufficiently reinforce the important components from earlier learning, and pupils' understanding is not systematically checked. As a result, some pupils' understanding is not as secure as it should be. This affects how well some pupils achieve. Where this is the case, the school should ensure that pupils' understanding of important concepts is secure before moving on to new learning.

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	137052
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10362397
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	2,273
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	430
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lord Jim Knight
CEO of the trust	Tom Campbell
Headteacher	Paul McFadden
Website	www.ousedale.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined E-ACT multi-academy trust in September 2024.
- The current headteacher has been in post since October 2024. He was previously the senior deputy headteacher at the school.
- The school has two campuses, one in Olney and one in Newport Pagnell. Both campuses cater for pupils from Years 7 to 11. Students in the sixth form attend the Newport Pagnell campus.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers of education.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff, and representatives from the multi-academy trust, including the chair and the CEO.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, modern foreign languages, geography, music and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and support staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To explore the impact of the school on pupils' education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and well-being over time, inspectors met with leaders and staff to discuss the school's provision. Inspectors also considered a range of policies and additional documentation.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who completed Ofsted's confidential survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff who completed a confidential survey and gathered their views when meeting with them.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Inspectors met with pupils to consider their views on the education they receive.

Inspection team

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