Inspection of Outwood Academy Acklam

Hall Drive, Acklam, Middlesbrough TS5 7JY

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 March 2025
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Good

The principal of this school is Graham Skidmore. This school is part of the Outwood Grange Academies 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), Lee Wilson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Earnshaw.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they should conduct themselves. Most pupils meet these expectations. Behaviour and attendance at the school have improved of late. The school nurtures vulnerable pupils. Pastoral care is high quality. The school is ambitious for all pupils. Achievement has improved over time. This includes for disadvantaged pupils. However, a proportion of pupils still do not achieve as well as their peers nationally in external tests and assessments.

The school promotes tolerance and encourages pupils to show understanding and respect for others. Some pupils have received training as 'Diana Award' ambassadors to help others to speak up if they are worried about something. However, a small minority of pupils still use language that can upset others. The school is aware of this and is taking action to give pupils further confidence in how such incidents are reported and addressed.

Enrichment opportunities such as residential visits, talks from local religious leaders and trips to the House of Lords enhance pupils' educational experiences. The school's 'Outwood Honours' programme encourages pupils to engage in activities in their school and wider community. Pupils are confident and communicate well. The school develops the skills and character traits pupils will need for future success.

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

The curriculum for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is broad and ambitious. For example, an increasing number of pupils now study a modern foreign language. The school has thought carefully about the most important knowledge and skills pupils need to learn. Pupils learn the knowledge and skills intended in the majority of subjects.

Staff understand the topics pupils might find most difficult to understand. They revisit previous learning to ensure it is understood before moving on to anything new. The school has a precise understanding of what pupils can and cannot do. This information is used to give pupils the extra help they need to succeed. However, the impact of this support is not fully realised in the school's published outcomes.

The school identifies pupils with SEND and their specific needs effectively. Information available to staff outlines what support will benefit pupils the most. In most subjects, the curriculum is well implemented for its pupils. Staff choose activities that help pupils successfully understand what is intended. Adaptations for pupils with SEND help them learn the same curriculum as their peers.

Pupils at an early stage of learning to read or who speak English as an additional language (EAL) get the help they need to improve their literacy. This ensures that pupils can access the curriculum and understand new topics. The school's records show that pupils who have fallen behind with their reading catch up to their peers quickly. The library is well used. Pupils talk about books they are reading with enthusiasm.

Despite the school's high expectations for pupils' conduct and attendance, a minority of pupils do not meet these. Rates of persistent absence and suspension negatively impact on some pupils' education. The school's response to these ongoing challenges has begun to make a positive impact. More remains to be done to ensure these improvements are as effective as they might be.

The school's personal, social and health education is adapted to the context of the local community. It responds to events and issues that might negatively impact on pupils. Staff understand the risks pupils face, for example from knife crime or drugs. Pupils are confident to speak to an adult if they have a concern. They are taught how to stay safe online and in person.

Leaders understand the importance of integrating careers education into the curriculum. This is beginning to help pupils think more deeply about their career choices. Links to high-performing public schools, a range of employers and visits to the House of Lords help inspire pupils to achieve their best.

The school is well led and managed. Those responsible for governance support and challenge school leaders. School improvement priorities are precise. This ensures that changes are sustainable and positively impact pupils' education. Professional development for staff is effective. For example, staff know how best to support pupils with SEND and who speak EAL. The well-being of both pupils and staff is prioritised by leaders.

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 strategies to improve attendance are not effective for a minority of pupils. This means that these pupils do not benefit from the positive education and wider support that the school provides because they are missing school too frequently. The school should further refine its actions in this area so that fewer days of education are lost to absence, enabling all pupils to achieve their potential.
- A small group of pupils continue to be suspended from school on a regular basis. The school's determined approach to improve these pupils' attitudes to their education has had limited success. Pupils are missing important learning as a result. The school should review its approach to supporting these pupils and identify which strategies work best to engage them more fully in their education.

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	139823
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	10346499
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,199
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Earnshaw
CEO of the trust	Lee Wilson
Principal	Graham Skidmore
Website	www.acklam.outwood.com
Dates of previous inspection	2 and 3 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Outwood Grange Academies Trust in 2013.
- Since the previous inspection, the principal and several other senior leaders have taken up their roles.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder.
- The school uses three registered and one unregistered alternative provision.
- 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. The 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 principal and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also spoke with members of the trust board, local academy council and the CEO.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils and teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for careers education at the school.
- Inspectors met with early career teachers and those who mentor them.
- Inspectors met with the leaders responsible for reading and literacy across the school.
- Inspectors examined the school's behaviour records and spoke with providers of alternative education. One inspector met with pupils who had been suspended to understand more about the support they have received.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator. They looked at a range of documentation, including education, health and care plans and individual learning plans. Inspectors also checked how pupils with SEND are supported in lessons.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour, bullying and what it is like to attend the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents and carers to the online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

John Linkins, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Karen Gammack	Ofsted Inspector

Alexandra Hook	Ofsted Inspector
Katie Spurr	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Lewis	Ofsted Inspector

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