

Inspection of an outstanding school: Outwood Academy Valley

Valley Road, Worksop, Nottinghamshire S81 7EN

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy coming to school and want to learn. They understand why staff expect them to 'be safe, be respectful and be responsible'. Many pupils live up to these high expectations. They appreciate being recognised as a 'classroom champion'. They enjoy collecting 'praise points' and showcasing their work on the 'proud podium'. Most Year 7 pupils have achieved a bronze award for their positive conduct.

A minority of pupils struggle to behave as well as they should. Some of these pupils are often suspended from school. They do not always get the help they need to improve their conduct. Some pupils say that a few staff do not respond to incidents of poor behaviour fairly or consistently.

Staff usually resolve bullying when they know about it. However, a small number of pupils say they do not always tell an adult about bullying when it happens.

Pupils benefit from taking part in a wealth of enrichment experiences. Many pupils marked Armistice Day recently with the local member of parliament. Pupils enjoy sporting competitions and musical productions. They donate to the local foodbank and support national charities. Many parents and carers typically comment that their children thrive in this school community.

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

Leaders have planned a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. They consider the needs of the local community when deciding which subjects pupils can opt to study. Pupils achieve well in many subjects, including in the sixth form.

Most curriculum leaders identify exactly what pupils need to learn and in what order. They use their subject expertise well to make links with other areas of the curriculum. This helps pupils develop a more-complex understanding of important ideas. Leaders have changed the key stage 3 curriculum recently. Pupils spend more time studying some subjects than previously. For example, extra content added to key stage 3 geography topics helps deepen pupils' geographical knowledge.

The curriculum is implemented effectively in many subjects. In English, teachers work together closely. They review and adapt the curriculum regularly to make sure that it meets pupils' needs. Teachers often revisit previous learning to reinforce pupils' understanding. Their high-quality questions introduce new vocabulary. Pupils grow in confidence and resilience.

Many teachers check pupils' knowledge carefully. They make effective use of different methods to spot gaps in pupils' learning. For example, in computer science, teachers challenge pupils to 'work harder and think harder', until they get the right answers. In art, teachers' personalised guidance helps pupils improve their work. However, in science, some teachers do not use information about what pupils know carefully enough to inform what comes next.

In a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not implemented as successfully. In these subjects, teachers do not check what pupils know already. They do not make it clear exactly what they want pupils to learn. Planned curriculum activities do not always pay close-enough attention to meeting all pupils' needs. Some pupils, including some with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), struggle to access the learning. They lose interest or get distracted. A few lessons are affected by low-level disruption as a result.

Pupils who need help with their reading get close support from well-trained staff. This helps these pupils become accurate and self-assured readers. Pupils choose books that match their reading ability from the school's well-stocked library. They enjoy discussing plot lines and characters. They challenge themselves to read more words so that they can get a reward.

The school's programme to support pupils' personal development is not consistently strong. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, their rights and responsibilities and how to look after their mental health. However, they know little about different faiths and cultures. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, have too-few opportunities to engage with the world of work. The 'guidance' programme in the sixth form does not prepare students well enough to live independently. Leaders are currently reviewing the personal development programme for pupils in key stages 3 and 4 to identify how they can improve the offer.

Most staff feel well supported by leaders. They value the extensive range of training that is available through the trust to improve their practice. A few support staff say that their workload is excessive.

Those responsible for governance are very well informed. They know the challenges faced by the school well. They provide school leaders with close support. School and trust leaders continually seek ways to make the school better. Most parents would recommend the school to others.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are knowledgeable about the safeguarding risks affecting pupils. They seek appropriate support from external agencies for pupils who need extra help. Leaders' safeguarding concerns and their actions to support pupils are not always recorded as rigorously as they could be.

Staff report any safeguarding concerns they have about pupils promptly. They know they must report some concerns directly to the police.

Pupils feel safe in school. Most would talk to an adult if they were worried about something.

No adult starts to work at the school before leaders have completed appropriate recruitment checks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not think carefully enough about how to present subject content appropriately to meet pupils' needs. They do not check that all pupils have secured the knowledge they need before they move on. Some pupils have gaps in their learning and disengage. Leaders need to ensure that teachers' expectations of what all pupils can achieve are consistently high. They need to make sure that all teachers implement the curriculum consistently well so that pupils are successful in all subjects.
- The number of suspensions has reduced since the start of the academic year. However, it is still too high. Some pupils are repeatedly suspended from school because of their behaviour. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are suspended more often than their peers. Pupils who are suspended from school miss out on essential learning and rich experiences. Leaders need to reduce the number of suspensions and, in particular, the number of pupils who are repeatedly suspended. They need to ensure that pupils who are suspended from school get the support they need to improve their conduct.
- Leaders, including leaders in the sixth form, do not have a close-enough oversight of the school's wider curriculum offer. Pupils do not have a secure understanding of different faiths and cultures. They do not have sufficient opportunities to have meaningful encounters with the world of work. In the sixth form, too-few students benefit from work-experience placements. They do not engage routinely in youth social action projects. They do not learn important life skills needed to live independently as young adults. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils, including students in the sixth

form, benefit from a rich programme of personal development that prepares pupils well for their next steps and for adulthood.

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 May 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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138247
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10212543
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,751
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	267
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Earnshaw
Principal	David Cavill
Website	www.valley.outwood.com
Date of previous inspection	23 and 24 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The principal at the time of the previous inspection is now the school's executive principal. The current principal took up the post in October 2017.
- The chair of the local governing body has changed since the previous inspection.
- The number of pupils on the school's roll has increased significantly since the school's previous inspection. The number of students in the sixth form has declined since that time.
- The school's sixth-form centre is located close to the main school site at Valley Road, Worksop, Nottinghamshire S81 7EL. This centre is shared with sixth-form students from another school in the same multi-academy trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and one unregistered alternative provider.

- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 11 receive information about the full range of education and training options available to them, including information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began, Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, the executive principal, senior school leaders, trust leaders and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer, who is also a trustee.
- Inspectors did deep dives in five subjects: English, science, geography, art and computer science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, and considered pupils' work. They spoke with teachers and pupils. They heard pupils read. On the second day of the inspection, the lead inspector visited lessons in a wider range of subjects, including mathematics and modern foreign languages.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from a range of different year groups. They spoke with pupils informally and observed the behaviour of pupils during social times.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements by reviewing the school's record of pre-employment checks, holding discussions with the designated safeguarding leader, staff and pupils, and reviewing documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took note of the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View and Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and leaders' plans for school improvement. They considered information about behaviour and suspensions, pupils' attendance, pupils removed from the school's roll and the wider curriculum.

Inspection team

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