

# Inspection of a good school: Outwood Academy Acklam

Hall Drive, Acklam, Middlesbrough TS5 7JY

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Inspection dates:

2–3 October 2019

## Outcome

Outwood Academy Acklam continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say the school is very academic. There is a strong focus on doing well in English and mathematics. Most pupils are happy in school. They recognise that staff go the extra mile to challenge and push them in lessons. Most pupils do what their teachers ask quickly. However, a very small minority of pupils continue to misbehave from time to time. The increasing number of pupils who join the school are made to feel welcome from day one. Pupils new to the country receive excellent support to settle in and learn a new language. Pupils from different backgrounds and religions mix well together. There are few instances of bullying. Pupils told us that they know who to speak to if they have a concern. Most pupils know what bullying is; however, some pupils do not. Pupils are confident that teachers take it seriously and act swiftly to sort things out. Pupils say that they feel safe. Care and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is superb. Many opportunities exist for these pupils to seek comfort or personal advice when needed. Parents say that they would like more information to help them better understand what their children are learning and how well they are doing.

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

Leaders know that when most pupils join the school in Year 7 or later, they need extra help to improve their English and mathematical knowledge. The curriculum has been designed carefully with this in mind. Pupils remember the most important subject content for longer because learning activities regularly cover and reinforce old ground. This helps pupils to understand more clearly new vocabulary and ideas. Pupils' understanding in other subjects is weak when they join the school. For example, in geography many pupils struggle to name and locate the seven continents. This means that pupils have to learn content and skills that are often taught in key stages 1 and 2. While staff ensure that pupils study topics and learn skills that match the national curriculum, time is limited to cover subject content in depth before pupils 'drop' some subjects at the end of Year 8.

Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They receive high-quality support and training from school leaders and staff from the multi-academy trust (the trust). In the

past, pupils' achievement at the end of Year 11 has been strong. Nearly all pupils who leave the school go on to appropriate education, employment or training. Current pupils are doing well. When pupils do fall behind, or need more support, staff are quick to help pupils do better.

Pupils say there is a strong focus on doing well in their examinations. Yet, there are also many opportunities for pupils to develop personally during their time in school. Pupils improve their leadership skills during form class elections and group work in lessons. Furthermore, staff give up their time to run chess clubs, wider school trips and visits to universities. This helps to raise pupils' aspirations and improves already-strong teacher–pupil relationships. Some pupils do not have a very strong understanding of how they can look after their own physical and mental health. These pupils told inspectors they would welcome more support to promote fitness and lead a healthy lifestyle.

Pupils usually behave well. Their behaviour continues to get better. This has been helped by teachers' more personal approach this academic year. There is a strong emphasis on developing positive relationships in school. Although numbers are still quite high, far fewer pupils are excluded from school now. Leaders know that there is still work to do to improve attendance so that it is similar to or exceeds that of attendance in other schools nationally.

Staff morale is extremely high. Staff are proud to work at Outwood Academy Acklam. They say that senior leaders listen to and value their opinions. All staff who responded to Ofsted's inspection questionnaire said that leaders have created a climate in which teachers are trusted to take risks and change aspects of their work in ways that are right for the pupils. Leaders are highly effective in their role. They have a precise understanding of the school. The capacity for further improvement is strong.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A large number of pupils join or leave the school during the school year. While more arrive than leave, safeguarding leaders ensure that pupils who no longer attend the school do not go missing. Pupils who receive their education elsewhere are kept safe. Leaders visit these pupils regularly and work hard to reintegrate pupils back into school as quickly as possible. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families. Also, staff work well with external support agencies to provide safeguarding support to pupils when needed.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- At the last inspection, in January 2019, leaders were told to improve attendance and reduce exclusions so that they are in line with the national averages. Leaders and the trust have recently amended the way in which they deal with instances of inappropriate behaviour from pupils. This, and positive staff–pupil relationships, is helping to improve

pupils' behaviour across the school. However, there continues to be a small minority of pupils who do not meet the high expectations set by staff. Furthermore, attendance is improving and persistent absence is reducing. Leaders should continue to improve attendance further and reduce exclusions so that they are in line with the national averages.

- Some parents say that they would like more information from the school in relation to their children. Leaders must ensure that parents are informed about the work that their children are covering in school and how well they are doing.
- A small minority of pupils do not have a strong understanding of how to improve their own physical and mental health or what constitutes bullying. Leaders must ensure that pupils understand clearly the different ways and/or opportunities that exist to improve their physical and mental well-being. Leaders should also ensure that pupils understand what bullying is and how it can be dealt with effectively.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Outwood Academy Acklam to be good.

## How can I feedback 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139823
<b>Local authority</b>	Middlesbrough
<b>Inspection number</b>	10059113
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,264
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	David Earnshaw
<b>Principal</b>	Stephen Merifield (Principal) Mark Hassack (Executive Principal)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.acklam.outwood.com">http://www.acklam.outwood.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 January 2019

## Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils attending the school are White British.
- An increasing proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language have joined the school in recent years. Currently, nearly one in every three pupils speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The school is a member of Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT). Responsibility for the school rests with the board of trustees.
- Currently, the school uses full- and part-time alternative education provision for pupils at The Keys, River Tees Multi-Academy Trust, Reintegreat, Education Plus and Connect2 Education.

## Information about this inspection

- We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.
- We undertook deep dives into the following subjects: mathematics, English, geography and art. This involved a meeting with subject leaders; visits to a sample of lessons in these subjects; work scrutiny of books and other kinds of work produced by pupils who were part of classes observed by inspectors; and discussion with teachers and a group of pupils from the lessons observed.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, teachers and administrative staff, trustees and the chief executive officer from OGAT.
- We scrutinised pupils' work during lessons and with subject leaders.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone to three of the alternative education providers used by the school.
- We held informal and formal discussions with many pupils and observed interactions during social times.
- We observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, action plans and evaluations, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding files, recruitment checks and bullying logs.
- We took into account the 39 responses from parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Seventeen members of staff and 49 pupils completed Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys. All of these responses were taken into consideration.

## Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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