

Inspection of Outwood Academy Bishopsgarth

Harrowgate Lane, Bishopsgarth, Stockton-on-Tees TS19 8TF

Inspection dates:	7 and 8 January 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

The principal of this school is Jason Rhodes. This school is part of 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. There is also an executive principal, Steve Merifield, who is responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well cared for, and they are safe at Outwood Academy Bishopsgarth. The school puts pupils' best interests first, and staff know pupils well. The school often goes to great lengths to support pupils and their families, especially at times of great need.

The school has raised its expectations of pupils' behaviour, and most pupils conduct themselves well. The school is routinely calm and orderly. At social times, pupils mix cooperatively. They move sensibly through the school between lessons. Although bullying is a concern for some pupils, incidents are reducing, and the school takes effective action to resolve issues.

The school is committed to pupils' wider development. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to develop their interests in a range of clubs such as music, drama and photography, as well as in a wide range of sports.

Some of the school's work to secure a high-quality education has been impacted by the disruption caused by the pandemic. Improving the curriculum is a priority that the school has begun to address, and there are some early signs that this work is having a positive impact. However, there is more to do. Some pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they should.

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

The school has made positive changes to the curriculum to ensure that there is greater breadth and ambition. Leaders have introduced subjects in the arts and made ambitious changes to the curriculum in some subjects. This work is ongoing. Due to the recent nature of these curriculum changes, they have not yet had a full impact. While there was an improvement in examination results in 2024, some pupils do not routinely achieve as well as they should by the end of key stage 4.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. The school's approach to teaching, known in school as the 'five pillars', is used inconsistently. Pupils' understanding is not always well checked. In some cases, this means that misconceptions are not identified. This limits pupils' achievement.

The school quickly identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are provided with detailed information about pupils' needs and the strategies to support them. They ensure that pupils can access the curriculum. However, these pupils are subject to the same inconsistencies in the curriculum as their peers, so they do not always achieve as well as they should.

Pupils engage with high-quality books in regular 'immersive read' sessions at key stage 3. The school's approach to supporting older pupils with reading for pleasure is less developed. The school quickly identifies individual pupils who struggle with reading and who require specific support. More widely, the school has clear strategies to support

pupils with their reading in lessons. There is some variation in how well these strategies are used to help pupils develop their reading skills.

The school's behaviour policy is clear. It is used consistently. Pupils are regularly rewarded for their achievements. This is especially motivating for younger pupils. At times, some pupils do not have the skills or resilience to work independently. At times, this leads to some distractions in lessons. Where this is the case, pupils do not make the progress through the curriculum that they could.

Leaders work well with those pupils whose conduct does not meet their high expectations. Following the disruption to routines caused by the pandemic, there was a rise in the number of exclusions and suspensions at the school. Since then, the number of behaviour incidents and suspensions has reduced.

The school prioritises pupils' attendance. It works effectively to identify the barriers that some families face so it can take effective action to overcome them. As a result, recent rates of attendance have improved, and fewer pupils are persistently absent.

The school's 'Life' programme covers important themes such as healthy relationships and online safety. It provides pupils with opportunities to be active citizens in the local community. They visit residents at a local care home, litter pick and the choir performs in the local community. Pupils are proud that everyone is equal in their school.

The careers programme is carefully planned. Starting in Year 7, pupils receive detailed information and guidance to help them make informed choices about their next steps.

Leaders, including trustees and members of the local academy council, are skilled. Although the local academy council should have a more thorough understanding of the pupil premium strategy and associated funding, they do know the school well. Teachers feel well supported by the principal and other leaders with their workload and well-being. They are proud to work at the school. The principal and wider senior leadership team are united in their determination to further improve the school. They are aware that more time is needed to ensure all pupils benefit from their vision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The teaching of the curriculum is not consistently strong across all subjects. This is often because teachers do not consistently check for pupils' understanding and check for misconceptions. As a result, pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge and do not achieve as well as they should. The school should ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently well, including checking pupils' understanding and adapting

the curriculum where necessary, so all pupils' needs are met and they make the progress through the curriculum that they are capable of.

- Some aspects of the curriculum, including in some subjects and in reading, are new or are being developed. They are not fully embedded or yet having the impact they might. The school should embed recent curriculum changes, such as with the reading curriculum and subject curriculums, ensuring that leaders, including governors, evaluate these developments thoroughly so they have a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Some pupils' resilience and skills to learn independently are not as developed as they could be. To an extent, this is limiting these pupils' academic and social development. The school should further develop ways to build pupils' resilience and skills to learn independently, ensuring this positively impacts pupils' academic and social development.

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	143146
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10297433
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	600
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Earnshaw
CEO of the trust	Lee Wilson
Principal	Jason Rhodes
Website	www.bishopsgarth.outwood.com
Dates of previous inspection	29 and 30 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school runs a small specially resourced provision which supports pupils with physical and medical needs.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative provisions and two registered alternative provisions.
- 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). 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 various leaders from the school and from the trust. The lead inspector met with the chair of the local academy council and a member of the board of the trustees. Inspectors reviewed documentation relating to governance, including minutes from governor meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, history and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors also visited lessons from a range of other subjects.
- 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 met with groups of pupils formally during the inspection and spoke with them at social times and in lessons.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff formally during the inspection and spoke with them throughout the inspection. Inspectors also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- The lead inspector took account of responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Dan McKeating, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Julie McGrane	Ofsted Inspector
David Milligan	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Brinton	Ofsted Inspector

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