

Outwood Grange Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135961
Local authority	Not Applicable
Inspection number	381984
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	John Rutherford HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2,196
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	362
Appropriate authority	The Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT) through the Academy Council (AC)
Chair	OGAT - Jim Walkden; AC - Michael Ramsay
Headteacher	Chief Executive and Academy Principal – Michael Wilkins Principal – Martyn Oliver
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent over 19 hours observing 56 lessons and they gathered further evidence from short observations of groups of students receiving additional support. Meetings were held with the Chief Executive and Academy Principal, the Principal, senior and middle leaders, groups of students and the Chair of the Academy Council. Inspectors took account of responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. During the inspection, they observed the academy's work and looked at a range of documents including those relating to students' progress, self-evaluation, improvement planning and safeguarding. Inspectors considered questionnaires returned from students, staff and 83 parents and carers.

Information about the school

The academy is larger than most secondary schools. Six per cent of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. Seven per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Less than 4% of students have a disability and/or special educational needs. The academy opened in September 2009 as an Academy of Excellence, sponsored by the Outwood Grange Academies Trust. It founded the Outwood Family of Academies, leading improvement in a number of other schools. It has been a National Training School for eight years and was recently accredited as a National Teaching School. The academy's performance is significantly above average in relation to all of the national floor standards for students' attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- Outwood Grange Academy provides an outstanding quality of education. The very large majority of parents and carers who returned an inspection questionnaire would recommend the academy to others.
- Students' achievement is outstanding. When students enter the academy, their standards of attainment are above average. All groups of students make progress at a better than expected rate and attain very high standards by the end of Key Stage 4.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students of all abilities are admitted and all groups make rapid progress through courses well suited to their needs and aspirations.
- The overwhelming majority of students are successful in going on to education, employment or training after they leave the academy. Students are very well prepared for this because work in a number of subjects, within the outstanding curriculum, helps them to achieve high standards in literacy, discussion, numeracy, and information and communication technology.
- Outstanding teaching is at the root of students' excellent achievement. Teachers have very high expectations and, in the majority of lessons, they provide challenging, interesting activities which considerably extend students' skills of learning independently.
- The excellent behaviour of the vast majority of students contributes to an outstanding climate for learning, and this makes a significant contribution to their high levels of achievement.
- Students are very interested in learning about such matters as relationships, staying healthy, current affairs, global issues and right and wrong. They make good progress in these aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in such subjects as English, geography, science and design technology. Work in many mixed-age 'vertical mentor groups' also makes a very strong contribution, however this is not consistent across the academy.

- The drive for the academy's success comes from the outstanding work of its leaders. They sustain, among almost all staff, a strong focus on achieving excellent outcomes for students through consistency in best practice. Underpinning this is the academy's very systematic and effective approach to the professional development of leaders and teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure greater consistency in using vertical mentor groups to enhance students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The most recent published data, school records and inspection evidence indicate that students' achievement is outstanding. The very large majority of parents and carers who returned an inspection questionnaire are rightly happy with the progress their children make in the academy. All groups of students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make accelerated progress and achieve standards of attainment at the age of 16 years that are well above average, both in academic and vocational subjects. Overall, students in the sixth form make progress at the same exceptional rate because they are highly motivated and they respond very well to the additional responsibility they are given for their own learning. In 2011, over four-fifths of sixth form students gained a place at a university.

All groups of students accelerate their progress because teachers frequently assess their outcomes and immediately provide very effective support or challenge for any who are underachieving. A combination of challenging targets, clear guidance and additional lessons enables more-able students to achieve well. The progress of less-able students and those with a disability and/or special educational needs is particularly good because of the very well planned support for them, both within lessons and in a very effective learning support unit. This is enabling them to close the gap with other groups of students. Students who start in Year 7 with below average reading skills are given a very well planned programme of additional work. This enables them to make rapid progress in developing the reading fluency and comprehension skills they need for effective learning across the curriculum.

Students' achievement is consistently above average in the vast majority of subjects in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. In the minority where it is not so high, it is rapidly improving. This is because leaders closely monitor a wide range of information about the work of students and teachers, and they take quick and decisive action where there is evidence of underperformance.

Quality of teaching

The very large majority of parents and carers who returned an inspection questionnaire feel that their children are taught well. Inspectors support this view with a judgement that the quality of teaching is outstanding. Because of the academy's systematic approach to the

continuous professional development of teachers, there is considerable consistency in very effective practice across all subjects and key stages. Teachers have very high expectations not only for what students will achieve, but also for the way they will learn during lessons. They draw on their excellent subject knowledge to set challenging problem-solving and research tasks which the students are required to tackle independently and through group collaboration. A very good example was seen in a Year 7 science lesson, when students made outstanding progress in learning about volcanoes through: individual research; pooling ideas in group discussion; assessing the quality of the information and displaying their work to inform others. In a Year 13 physical education lesson, a similar approach enabled students to extend significantly their sports psychology skills when debating the leadership style that would be required of a new national football team manager. Such interesting challenges as these, across the curriculum, contribute significantly to students' exceptional progress in discussion and writing skills and to their enthusiasm as learners. They also help students to learn how to form constructive relationships and to develop a wider understanding of the lives of people in different social and cultural contexts, which are important aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The majority of teachers continuously assess students' progress during lessons and change the pitch of work for individuals and groups where required. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, the teacher increased the challenge in number sequence problems as soon as he observed that pupils, on their own initiative, were working at a harder level than planned. Very occasionally, a small minority of teachers rely too much on assessing students' work during lessons when deciding the best level of challenge for each group, rather than using the wealth of available assessment information to inform more precise advance planning. This results in a small number of students spending a short time on tasks that are too easy for them instead of getting straight on with suitably challenging work. The teaching and support for students with a disability and/or special educational needs is very well adapted to each individual's requirements and this helps them to access broadly the same curriculum as all students and to get closer to their attainment levels.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is excellent, both in supervised and unsupervised situations. This contributes significantly to their achievement, particularly on the many occasions when independent work or group collaboration helps them to learn at a very good pace. Students are generally keen to settle down and get on with their work because they have high aspirations and are very focused on meeting their challenging targets. The overwhelming majority of parents, carers and students who returned an inspection questionnaire see behaviour as a positive feature of the academy.

The questionnaires also showed that over four-fifths of parents and carers agree that the academy deals effectively with bullying, nevertheless the relatively greater level of disagreement about this aspect prompted inspectors to look more closely into it. The evidence provided by a significant number of students is that they feel free from any form of bullying; they believe that cases of bullying are extremely rare and effectively dealt with. This is confirmed by the academy's detailed records of all forms of aggressive or discriminatory behaviour. Overall, the overwhelming majority of students who returned an inspection questionnaire stated that they enjoy being at the academy and feel safe. This is reflected in students' attendance figures which are above average and rising.

Excellent behaviour is the result of teaching that motivates students to work hard combined with a very consistently applied system of positive and negative 'consequences'. Students are very clear what the consequences of their good or poor behaviour will be, and they are strongly motivated to earn rewards. Academy leaders monitor closely the negative 'consequences' applied to students, checking in particular for any groups receiving a disproportionate amount of them. A recent outcome of this monitoring was more effective methods for working with students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This improved their behaviour while significantly reducing their fixed-term exclusions and persistent absenteeism to levels below the national averages.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are outstanding. They are characterised by a very ambitious drive for excellence centred on the academy's motto; 'Students First'. Leaders are determined that all groups of students will have the same opportunity to achieve as much as they can; therefore they are strongly focused on using assessment information to identify and remove any barriers to learning. This is the case not only within Outwood Grange, but also in the other academies that constitute the Outwood 'family'. The strength of the leaders' work is seen in the fact that standards of attainment are rising in every one of these academies.

Senior leaders are successfully raising standards of attainment because they have a clear, shared view of the fundamental aspects of teaching and assessment that are needed to accelerate students' progress. These methods are applied consistently because teachers receive carefully planned professional development, tailored to their individual needs. Teachers very quickly improve their classroom practice and develop their leadership skills because they are given the opportunity to work in, and learn from Outwood Grange's partner schools in the Outwood 'family' and in their National Teaching School alliance.

Academy leaders at all levels have a detailed and accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. This is because they systematically collect and analyse a considerable amount of information on students' progress, the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of subject leadership. Where underperformance is found, improvements are quickly put in place and rigorously checked to ensure they are improving students' achievement. For example, a recent decline in students' progress in a small number of subjects was quickly halted by changing leadership arrangements, recruiting and training teachers and commissioning more successful subject departments to share effective practice. The result was a significant improvement in students' standards of attainment within a term. This demonstrates the outstanding capacity of leaders at all levels to sustain and further improve the academy's very high standards of attainment in the future.

The Academy Council has a very clear understanding of the quality of provision and outcomes within Outwood Grange and, in partnership with the over-arching Outwood Grange Academies Trust; it makes a significant contribution to the strategic direction of the academy. The very large majority of parents and carers who returned an inspection questionnaire feel that the academy keeps them well informed about their children's progress and helps them to support their children's learning.

Academy leaders provide an outstanding curriculum in Key Stages, 3, 4 and 5. It is broad and flexible enough to enable the vast majority of students to select courses which, with the

effective guidance they receive, helps them to meet their academic and vocational aspirations. The large majority of students who returned an inspection questionnaire feel that the academy prepares them well for their future. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular enrichment activities on offer which enables students to extend their skills in academic, cultural and sporting pursuits. The curriculum as a whole makes a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, students showed considerable interest and enjoyment in: learning about other countries and using their languages; in using art to represent aspects of Britain's role in the Commonwealth; in adapting meals for people with special dietary requirements and in reflecting on the morality of celebrities' earnings compared with the resources available to the very poor across the world. Opportunities for extending this work in mixed-age 'vertical mentor groups' are occasionally missed and, where this happens, the group session makes little contribution to students' personal and social education. The academy's arrangements for keeping students safe meet statutory requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



10 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Outwood Grange Academy, Wakefield, WF1 2PF

Thank you very much indeed for your help when I came with my colleagues to inspect your academy. We found our discussion with you very useful in helping us to make the judgement that your academy provides you with an outstanding quality of education.

You make exceptional progress in most of your subjects and attain very high standards, both at the end of Year 11 and Year 13. Your progress in the basic skills of literacy, discussion, numeracy, and information and communication technology gives you a very strong basis for your life after you leave Outwood Grange. You also quickly develop the very important skills of working independently and solving problems through teamwork. Your responsible approach to managing your own behaviour creates an excellent climate for learning in classrooms. Many of you told us that you feel free from any significant threat of bullying and we could see how well students get on together. This makes the academy a very pleasant place to visit.

In my report I have paid tribute to the academy staff and leaders for the way they ensure you get the best education possible. I have also agreed with them one minor area for improvement to help them enrich your education further. This is to make sure that your vertical mentor groups are consistently more useful in promoting your personal and social development. I am confident that you will take full advantage of the increased opportunities to discuss important issues relating to your life inside and beyond the academy.

My best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector

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