

Oak Academy

Duck Lane, Bournemouth, Dorset BH11 9JJ

Inspection dates

1–2 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over recent years, the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 11 and Year 13 have been well below the national average. The progress of current pupils is improving and illustrates the positive changes that have been made since the school became part of the Ambitions Academies Trust in 2017.
- The curriculum has not been sufficiently broad and balanced. Leaders have now made substantial changes to the range of subjects that pupils study.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has been weak.
- Although the quality of teaching is improving, it is not yet consistently good, including in the sixth form. This is because teachers do not always plan lessons that provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils or provide support for those pupils who need it.
- Senior leaders have improved the rate of attendance. However, rates of absence remain too high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND.
- Rates of exclusion are higher than the national average. A legacy of low expectations has meant that a minority of pupils still find increased expectations difficult to manage.
- There has been a complete overhaul of middle leadership over the last two years. Subject leaders now have the collective capacity to support senior leaders to accelerate the improvements needed.
- Pupils are compliant but often lack confidence in their ability. There are remnants of low aspiration and therefore pupils are not always resilient when they find things difficult.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. The trust has provided significant support and a sense of moral purpose. The director of outcomes and principal provide stability and a clear sense of direction about how improvements will be achieved.
- Leaders are committed to the personal development of pupils and to ensuring that they receive quality advice and guidance about their next steps.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - middle leaders continue to develop their skills, so they can support the drive for rapid improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - sustaining improvement through ensuring that expectations continue to rise so that teachers' practice is consistently good across subjects
 - continuing to develop teachers' skills in using assessment information to match learning precisely to the needs of pupils, challenging the most able and supporting pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND, to reach their potential.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - continuing to implement robust strategies to challenge those pupils who do not attend school regularly, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND
 - further developing pupils' ability to persevere with learning when they find it difficult
 - further developing support for pupils who find behaviour expectations difficult to manage, so that the rate of exclusion is reduced.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the school joined the Ambitions Academies Trust in 2017, there has been a determined and relentless focus to improve the standard of education that the school provides. Leaders have had to overcome significant challenges to rectify the weaknesses of the past and redesign systems which had hitherto not been fit for purpose. They have undertaken this with energy and articulate a clear vision for the school and the curriculum. Leaders are committed to providing the best possible experiences and life opportunities for pupils in their care.
- Senior leaders have created a calm environment and are working hard to engage the community. They understand the need to restore trust in the school's ability to provide quality education for pupils. There is still work to do and, as a result, the number of pupils who leave the school is high. Some pupils join specialist provision in the area. However, some have made the decision based on the poor quality of experience they have received in the past. This is reflected in the Parent View survey. Leaders are aware of individual pupils who leave the school but recognise that they now need to have a better strategic oversight, so that they can reduce this level of pupil movement.
- Leaders do not shy away from, or make excuses for, the failings of the past. They demonstrate that they have the vision and rigour to sustain improvements in the future. They have rectified weaknesses in the curriculum provision and are accurate in their evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. Where there are weaknesses, they have taken swift and decisive action to improve the school's performance.
- Changes to senior leadership have provided stability and a sense of direction from which to build. Staff and pupils say that the school has changed positively since the new principal was appointed and the trust has taken over responsibility for the school. Staff are overwhelmingly proud to work at the school and feel that they receive effective professional training. Newly appointed teachers say that they are well supported at the beginning of their careers, both from within the school and also more widely across the trust.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is accurate and honest and is focused on the right areas to achieve the improvements needed. Senior leaders know the school well, show a convincing understanding of their roles and now have the capacity to ensure that strategies lead to accelerated improvement.
- Leaders show a commitment to ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make better progress. Their plans to achieve this are now more robust and accurately identify barriers to pupils' learning to ensure that support is effectively targeted. They recognise that the impact of actions has not been sufficiently evaluated in the past, which has contributed to pupils' achievement not improving quickly. This more specific focus means that current pupils are making better progress and gaps with their peers are closing.
- Leaders are cognisant of the fact that pupils with SEND have not made effective progress in the past. Part of this is due to the curriculum that pupils have completed. However, it is also because teaching does not always provide the support that pupils need. Leaders are working towards ensuring a more strategic oversight of this area of

the school's work. The progress of current pupils is indicative that this is improving. However, more time is needed to illustrate more rapid progress over a longer period of time.

- The actions taken have resulted in an environment that is more conducive to learning. However, leaders have not yet consistently established good teaching across the school. Consequently, some pupils, and particularly those in Years 10 and 11, do not make the progress they are capable of. There is a notable difference in the quality of younger pupils' work compared to that of older pupils. This reflects the increased expectations that younger pupils are more used to.
- There have been significant changes to middle leadership over the last two years. Subject leaders clearly understand their importance in accelerating school improvement and are developing their skills to do this effectively. They have confidence in the support provided by senior leaders and the external support from the trust. They meet regularly with senior leaders to discuss the progress pupils are making and feel included in strategic decision-making. This has resulted in higher attainment in several subject areas.
- Leaders have redefined pastoral middle leadership at the start of this academic year, to better meet the needs of pupils. This is in response to leaders' awareness that the school required additional capacity to address issues in attendance and the management of behaviour. The trust has provided additional resources to bolster this provision and enable leaders to provide a more personalised approach. For example, the Oak Progression Programme provides additional support from trained adults for pupils who require it and current pupils value these opportunities. However, there is still work to do to overcome the legacy of weaker support in the past. Some pupils do not respond positively to the increased expectations of attendance and conduct.
- Extra-curricular activities support pupils' learning well. Leaders value the importance of broadening pupils' experiences to raise their aspirations and this is an important feature of the new curriculum. The enrichment programme includes a range of sporting and cultural opportunities to build confidence, improve self-esteem and develop resilience. Last year, pupils travelled a total of 11,355 miles on trips and visits, including three cultural exchanges to China. Leaders are committed to equality of opportunity and ensure that all pupils have access to these activities.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has gone through significant turbulence prior to joining the trust. They recognise that they have not challenged leaders sufficiently in the past because they did not have the skills and expertise to do so effectively. In addition, the considerable financial challenges that the school faced meant that governors did not have sufficient focus on the quality of teaching and learning to allow stringent challenge of weak performance.
- The chair of governors is now well informed about the school's actions to improve the quality of education the school provides. The plans to evaluate the use of additional funding are now more detailed and more aligned to the impact of actions taken. The trust has taken over the substantive governance of the school and has provided considerable support and appropriate training to model and develop governors'

knowledge and skills. Governors are now better placed to meet their statutory responsibilities and support and challenge effectively.

- Governors are ambitious for the school and are committed to its success. They have openly welcomed the support of the trust and look forward positively to developing their role to ensure that the improvements evident are sustained.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders ensure that there is a culture of vigilance at the school. There were some administrative errors in the logging of recruitment information at the time of inspection but, in practice, leaders follow government guidelines to ensure that staff are safe to work with children.
- There are examples of where the school goes to considerable lengths to support the emotional well-being of pupils who are considered to be vulnerable. Leaders have appointed trained staff who provide early help for pupils and their families. Rigorous checks are made on pupils who attend an alternative provision or have a personalised timetable and every effort is made to reintegrate pupils back into their regular classes. Staff work proactively with external agencies to ensure that pupils are well supported in times of need. Leaders keep clear records of actions taken and the responses and challenge when they are not satisfied with the resolution.
- Staff know the potential signs of concern and understand how to use the school's system to report this. Training is up to date and incorporates regular briefings to ensure that staff are aware of pertinent issues, including protecting pupils from radicalisation and exploitation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is improving and there are many examples where teachers' strong subject knowledge and increased expectations, regarding organisation and presentation, are clear to see. This is particularly evident in the younger year groups. However, teaching requires improvement due to the inconsistency between the most effective teaching and the least.
- Where teaching is stronger, pupils respond positively to teachers' expectations to improve their work. Where this is the case, they extend their thinking as a result of effective questioning. Pupils show an increasing ability to use technical vocabulary and are developing the stamina to complete extended pieces of writing. For example, work in English has focused on supporting pupils to develop their analytical skills in response to a range of texts.
- Leaders have done much to ensure that assessment supports pupils' progress. Where this is used well, teachers' use of assessment is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. However, this approach is not consistent across the curriculum and pupils do not build on what they already know sufficiently. This limits the progress pupils make.
- Where teaching is weaker, work is pitched too low or pupils are slow to start and therefore do not complete tasks. In these cases, pupils do not demonstrate the

necessary independence in their learning to challenge themselves, take the initiative or be self-reliant. Partly this is due to a lack of confidence and an unwillingness to make mistakes. However, this is also due to pupils waiting for teachers to provide the answers. This means that the most able pupils, in particular, do not make the progress that they are capable of.

- Teachers' planning is improving and there is increased adherence to the school's teaching and learning priorities. However, there are still inconsistencies in the way in which teachers plan to take account of pupils' starting points and the potential they have. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have gaps in their knowledge, due to weak teaching in the past. Leaders are acutely aware of this and have introduced a number of interventions. However, within lessons, teaching does not routinely correct misconceptions or highlight clearly what pupils need to do to improve. As a result, pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are not always secure.
- Parents receive information about their children's progress and are invited to parental consultation evenings to learn more about their learning and next steps in education or training. Leaders are working hard to ensure that these events are well attended by parents.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have implemented key strategies to ensure that pupils become confident and responsible citizens in the future. The changes to the curriculum have ensured that these strategies and topics studied are integral to the development of pupils' sense of worth and well-being. Pupils have an increasing understanding of issues relevant to life in modern Britain. However, pupils are not always confident in articulating how this relates to their personal experiences and immediate environment.
- Pupils can explain how to recognise risk and know how to stay healthy and safe, including when using the internet or social media. They understand other risks such as the threats posed by knife crime or the misuse of drugs. The large majority of pupils say that they are confident to talk with staff when issues arise so that concerns are addressed quickly.
- Teachers are highly aware of pupils' health and emotional well-being, particularly around issues of mental health. Pupils spoke of the support they are given to develop strategies to deal effectively with the stresses of examinations.
- The school operates a breakfast club which provides pupils with a positive start to the school day, through allowing them to socialise, read, or prepare for the day ahead. Staff interact with pupils positively at this time.
- Senior leaders provide advice and guidance for pupils about their possible career choices. There is a clear plan, which is age-appropriate, and ensures that choices are suitably challenging. This has improved aspiration, shown by the increased number of pupils who applied for university places last year.

- The school also uses some provision at Bournemouth and Poole College. Leaders make regular contact to ensure that the quality of provision positively supports pupils' academic development and well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Senior leaders have raised expectations of how pupils should behave, both in lessons and around the site. The majority of pupils respond well to these expectations. However, a minority of pupils and parents say that there are still those who act inappropriately, which can interrupt learning in the classroom. Pupils recognise that where inconsistencies exist in the application of behaviour expectations, the quality of behaviour is not as strong.
- Rates of exclusion are reducing but are still higher than national figures. Leaders recognise that there is a legacy of pupils who are not able to respond positively to raised expectations. To address this, support and resources have been improved. This is indicative of leaders' commitment to ensure that exclusion is used as a last resort. The current provision demonstrates how leaders are supporting pupils to remain in education, before the need for exclusion is reached. However, it is too early to see the sustained impact of this approach.
- Pupils' conduct around the site contributes to a welcoming atmosphere. They are polite to visitors, holding doors open and responding positively to greetings. Relationships in lessons are largely positive and pupils respond well to prompts by teachers where expectations fall below the standard expected. The large majority of staff support this view. Pupils are increasingly willing to accept praise and celebrate each other's achievements. This is a direct result of leaders' efforts to reinforce positive attitudes.
- Pupils focus well in lessons, but, at times, lack the resilience to complete work independently. Their compliant behaviour does not always translate into positive habits of learning.
- Leaders know the reasons for poor attendance and are making concerted efforts to improve this. Leaders have implemented more rigorous systems to ensure that pupils attend regularly, and the work of the newly appointed family liaison officer has led to improvement in the last year. However, rates of absence and persistent absence remain too high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- There has been long-standing underperformance in the progress pupils make from their starting points. Over the last two years, leaders have made substantial changes to the curriculum to support pupils to make better progress. Teachers now monitor pupils' progress regularly. Consequently, the quality of work for current pupils shows an improved picture.
- Weaknesses in teaching and inconsistencies in targeted support have, in the past, meant that disadvantaged pupils, those pupils with SEND and the most able have not made the progress they are capable of. There is, however, an improving picture for

current pupils. However, the progress of higher prior-attaining pupils is not as secure. This is consistent with the need to provide greater challenge for this group of pupils.

- The changes made to subject leadership, combined with the improved approach to teaching and learning, have led to improvement in the proportion of pupils who achieve grade 4+ or 5+ in English, mathematics, geography, history and modern foreign languages in 2018. The school's own information shows that pupils are now making better progress than found previously. Scrutiny of pupils' work and the improved assessment systems in place, indicate that pupils in key stage 3 are making better progress. Those pupils who have fallen behind in literacy and numeracy are well supported to rectify deficits in their knowledge and understanding as they move through key stage 3.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Progress for A-level students and those on applied courses has largely been in the lowest 20% of schools for the last three years. The most recent cohort has shown improvement. However, underperformance at key stage 4 has meant that students have not been prepared well for the rigours of A-level study. Teaching in the sixth form has not enabled students to deepen their knowledge and attain the highest grades. Teaching in the sixth form is now much improved. The school has shown commitment to ensuring that students receive a better quality of education than they have had in the past, before the provision closes at the end of the academic year.
- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. Whole-school policies are applied consistently, and detailed tracking of student attendance and progress means that teachers identify and support those students who fall behind.
- Leaders have taken the difficult decision to close the sixth-form provision at the end of the academic year. However, leaders have shown commitment to retain the integrity of the sixth-form experience for the remaining Year 13 students. They have ensured that programmes of study are suitably broad, enabling students to balance their academic study with a consideration of issues relating to their personal, social, health and economic understanding.
- Students are positive about their experience in the sixth form and feel supported by teachers. Where teaching is stronger, activities support students to engage in high-level discussion and encourages them to draw on their prior knowledge. In these instances, tasks are closely aligned to the requirements of the examination. Students understand assessment objectives and take time to reflect and refine their work in response to advice given. There are good examples in psychology where students reflect on examination responses and deliberate how these can be improved further. This is having a positive impact on the level of students' work. Where teaching is weaker, there is a lack of challenge, which does not allow students to demonstrate independence and the aptitudes required to access the higher grades.
- Staff prepare students well for the next stages of their education or training. Vocational courses contain a component of meaningful engagement with employers and students perform well on technical courses. All students were supported to complete a work experience placement during Year 12. Careers education is effective, and students are well supported with their university applications or alternative routes. As a result, there

has been an increase in the number of students who are making university applications.

School details

Unique reference number	139037
Local authority	Bournemouth
Inspection number	10053333

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	475
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	26
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Pat Marchiori
Headteacher	Richard Burgas
Telephone number	01202 774600
Website	www.oak-academy.co.uk/
Email address	office@leaf.bournemouth.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 March 2016

Information about this school

- Oak Academy joined the Ambitions Academies Trust in September 2017. Prior to this, it was part of the Learning and Achievement Federation Trust, along with a partner primary school and a studio school.
- The school is now overseen by a director of outcomes within the multi-academy trust and a principal, who was appointed in June 2016.
- Oak Academy is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. The sixth-form provision is due to close at the end of the academic year.

- The majority of pupils are from a White British background and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is in line with the national average.
- The number of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average.
- The school did not meet the government's floor standards in 2017, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- A small number of pupils use provision at Bournemouth and Poole College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and age groups and scrutinised pupils' written work. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with members of the leadership team.
- Meetings were held with members of the leadership team and representatives from the trust and governing body. In addition, inspectors met with curriculum and pastoral leaders.
- Inspectors met with pupils, both formally and informally, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, to discuss their views about their experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation, including the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and priorities for future improvement. Inspectors reviewed progress, behaviour and attendance information relating to current pupils, and governors' minutes.
- The school's policies relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour, the use of additional funding, including pupil premium, and the curriculum were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered 14 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as 33 responses to the pupil survey and 31 responses to the staff questionnaire, provided by Ofsted.

Inspection team

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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