

Outwood Academy Portland

Netherton Road, Worksop, S80 2SF

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The attainment and progress of students at the end of Key Stage 4 have improved dramatically.
- Teaching is of a consistently high quality. All students are stretched and challenged by the work they are given. Resources chosen to support students' learning are interesting and stimulating, but some marking is not wholly effective in helping students to improve their work.
- The Principal and Executive Principal provide outstanding leadership. They are ably supported by an exceptionally strong team both within the academy and through the highly effective overarching academy trust which maintains a consistent focus on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Leaders at all levels take an active part in driving improvement in teaching and achievement to ensure high standards. Subject leadership is very strong.
- The academy keeps its students safe and ensures that they are provided with the information they need to keep themselves safe.
- Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary and they show a spirit of enquiry and deep interest in learning. Students show consideration and courtesy to others. Behaviour systems are consistently followed and understood by staff and students.
- Strategies to improve attendance have resulted in rapid improvement, although not all students and parents are yet persuaded of the value of the excellent education the academy provides.
- The courses that students follow give them considerable choice and provide an impressive range of opportunities for learning.
- The sixth form is outstanding because teaching and an extensive range of course choices enable students to achieve their learning potential.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, three of which were seen together with senior leaders. They also undertook a series of shorter observations, which included findings on what they saw as they walked around the school, including the behaviour and attitudes of students.
- Meetings were held with: students from all year groups, governors, a representative from the Outwood Grange Academies Trust, subject leaders, and staff responsible for students' personal issues, attendance and special educational needs.
- The inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at: policies, self-evaluation and development planning, monitoring records, minutes of meetings of the governing body, information about students' progress, safeguarding documents and samples of students' work.
- The views of the 48 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, in addition to the academy's own survey of parents' and carers' views. A letter from a parent was also received by the inspection team.

Inspection team

Alison Moore, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mary Davis	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector
Christopher Crouch	Additional Inspector
Richard Hartley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Outwood Academy Portland became a sponsor-led academy on 1 June 2012. It is part of the Outwood Grange Academies Trust.
- This is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British. There is a smaller than national proportion of students from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is high compared nationally. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (which, in this academy, provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free academy meals) is below average.
- Sixth form provision is shared with Outwood Academy Valley, in the Worksop Post-16 Centre and with North Nottinghamshire College, which provides vocational courses for post-16 students.
- Virtually no students below sixth form age attend offsite alternative provision. Some vocational courses, such as motor mechanics and hair and beauty, are provided in house.
- The academy provides vulnerable students with a learning environment outside mainstream classes for short periods of time.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The senior leadership team is supported by the Outwood Grange Academies Trust which operates across several academies and has senior members who are National Leaders of Education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers' marking and feedback to students are always clear and consistent so that all students have a clear understanding of how to develop their work and are able to demonstrate to their teachers that they understand the advice given.
- Maintain a relentless focus on improving attendance for all pupils, particularly for those eligible for pupil premium funding, by persuading students and their parents of the importance of regular attendance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The academy shows a rising trend of achievement. Students typically start at the academy with skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics that are well-below average. By the end of Year 11 in 2013, the proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics was considerably above the national average and the academy's rigorous tracking of students' progress indicates that this standard is being maintained.
- The detailed monitoring of individual students' progress in all years ensures that students receive the support and challenge they need to achieve well. Current data show that the accelerated rate of improvement seen in 2013 is being maintained in the current academic year and that most students, including those capable of attaining the highest grades, are on track to achieve their ambitious targets.
- The academy's reliable progress data for students at the end of Key Stage 4 show that students of higher, middle or lower abilities are achieving significantly ahead of the latest validated analysis of students' progress nationally. This is also true for those students eligible for additional pupil premium funding.
- Students identified in need of additional help through the Year 7 'catch-up' funding for those who struggle with literacy and numeracy make excellent progress in enhancing their skills. Literacy support is continued in Year 8. Additional help is also made available to those students who need it at the end of the school day.
- There is a strong focus on the promotion of literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects, where students are frequently encouraged to read aloud. Posters and displays are engaging and informative.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported. Those students who speak English as an additional language are equally well supported. The academy's evaluation of the impact of its expenditure on the support provided shows that all these students are making similarly rapid progress to that of their classmates.
- Vulnerable individuals with particular special educational needs receive additional help for short periods of time in a welcoming learning environment outside main classes. This provision enables them to continue learning during a difficult period for them, and they are supported to make impressive progress.
- Students for whom the pupil premium provides additional funding show better progress than similar students nationally and their rate of progress is, currently, in line with that of their classmates. The academy's current progress data show that all eligible pupils at Key Stage 4 have made outstanding progress. The gap in progress in English and mathematics between the pupil premium cohort and that of other students is closing fast. Although eligible students' attainment in English and mathematics is below that of their peers in the academy, the gap is closing. In 2013, students eligible for additional funding were a year behind their classmates. Current assessment shows that this gap has closed to less than a term.
- In the sixth form, students' progress and achievement in both Years 12 and 13 are outstanding. Many students start their advanced courses without a record of strong prior attainment. Portland also accepts external students at post-16 for AS-level courses and some lack a grade C or higher at GCSE in both mathematics and English. GCSE classes are provided alongside students' other

subjects and this provides students with both essential qualifications and the extra support for their higher academic studies. Attainment at AS and A level has improved significantly. While not yet at the national average for the higher grades, students make excellent progress from their starting points. Current tracking of students' performance shows this pattern of improvement is accelerating. Fewer students discontinue their courses than in most schools.

- Sixth form arrangements operate effectively with a local college for students to pursue vocational courses there. Students for whom advanced courses are unsuitable, including some who have special educational needs, achieve well and gain qualifications.

The quality of teaching

Outstanding

- The rapid progress made by students in all subjects and year groups, including the sixth form, show that the quality of teaching is outstanding. Observations during this inspection confirm this quality of teaching.
- Teachers know their students very well and have very high expectations of what they can achieve. They are highly aware of the students who are eligible for pupil premium funding within their classes and target them during lessons to ensure that they achieve equally as well as other students. Teaching assistants are deployed to ensure better support for students, particularly focusing on those eligible for the pupil premium. Students receive subject-specific support.
- Teachers make learning interesting and engaging for students. Resources are well chosen to deepen students' understanding of the work in hand. Learning is stimulating and students respond very well. For example, students' learning in geography was extended by current news clips and music, which also promoted their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Likewise, Year 10 business studies students used examples of familiar companies very effectively to develop their understanding of the subject.
- Teachers help students to learn systematically. Consequently, students reinforce their learning well and develop their understanding to enable them to apply new skills in their work.
- Students are given opportunities to reflect on what they have learned. Good answers are reinforced by praise to encourage and engage. Students discuss their learning and share ideas to deepen their understanding. For example, in a GCSE history class, students combined their findings on the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 very well before analysing them.
- Teaching enables students of all abilities, including the more able, to develop confidence in themselves, and in their own ability to learn. Frequent instances were observed of students showing considerable maturity in coaching other students.
- Students know what they are aiming for from the targets they are set for each subject. Progress towards their targets is closely monitored and students know what aspects of their work they need to develop in order to meet or exceed their targets.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding and results are improving rapidly. Teachers monitor, review and assess students' understanding, ensuring that students have grasped key subject ideas that will enable them to achieve good grades. Sixth-form students receive outstanding information, support and guidance on the subjects they study. They take responsibility for monitoring their own progress against personal targets, and they collaborate well in helping each other to achieve.

- The academy puts emphasis on sixth formers gaining higher-order skills of analysis and evaluation. Students debate convincingly in class and read widely. These skills give the most able the opportunity to reach the highest grades. Workshops and lectures are available for students of exceptional ability.
- There is some inconsistency in the impact of teachers' marking. For example, not all teachers use the academy's recommended marking system and not all students know how well they are doing and what to do to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

Outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They settle quickly in lessons and cooperate with their teachers when asked to perform any learning activities. Students learn a consistency of approach which generates a strong desire to learn and to progress and this has a powerful impact on their learning.
- The academy's behaviour-management system creates a very positive environment for learning. Students with behavioural difficulties express their gratitude for the support they have received over time. One said, 'It made me realise that it was very silly behaving as I did – getting excluded all the time and always in trouble.' The system demonstrates, unequivocally, improvements in behaviour of particular students in a short period of time. Exclusions have dropped dramatically. The main driver for this reduction is the disciplinary code which pre-empts repeated exclusions with alternative positive response.
- Outstanding behaviour was seen by inspectors at break and lunchtimes during the inspection. Students are very polite and courteous to visitors. The academy promotes positive relationships among students, and they work very well together and support each other's learning. For example, they frequently applaud when another has provided a comment or answer in class which deserves merit.
- The academy works consistently to improve attendance and behaviour. There are clear procedures to monitor and support students who have difficulties with behaviour or attendance. The procedures are effective as shown in the rise in attendance from, sometimes, students' low starting points. The academy is focusing on families who struggle to get their children to the academy, making clear the effect absence has on their children's progress and their potential qualifications.
- Attendance rates were below average in 2013, but are improving strongly because leaders analyse reasons for poor attendance and follow up absences. Some students eligible for the pupil premium are seen as part of the drive to improve attendance further and to close the attainment gap between eligible students and others altogether.
- Sixth form students attend regularly and are punctual. Almost all students who leave the sixth form are in education, employment or training. The focus on improving attendance and punctuality is continued into the sixth form, with rewards of certificates and 'grand draws' or sanctions, resulting in very few late arrivals and good attendance. Sixth form contribute actively to the lower school. For example, they help younger students with reading, coach football and lead bands.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The academy has a positive

and caring atmosphere. Leaders ensure that the building is secure and that staff are rigorously checked prior to appointment. Students say they feel safe in the academy and their parents agree with that view. Bullying, including cyber-bullying is rare and students express their gratitude that adults will support them. They spoke warmly of the tutor system that enables older students to support younger ones, and which creates a 'family feel' to life across the academy.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Principal, senior leaders, subject leaders and governors are determined that students will achieve their potential as learners and reach their best standard – a commitment shared by all staff. Leaders use well-developed systems and processes to check and evaluate the academy's performance. As a result, they have an accurate view of the academy's strengths and areas requiring further improvement.
- The academy has a very accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders are skilled in working with staff to enable teaching that will engage and inspire students to learn. The rigorous system for the management of teachers' performance ensures that all are held to account for students' progress and achievement – including the Principal.
- The academy's meticulous tracking of students' learning and effort on a six-weekly cycle enables students, their teachers and the management system to analyse potential areas for improvement in students' performance. The system guides the academy to provide extra help where needed to keep students on track to meet the challenging targets set for them. This is the case for all students, including disabled students, those who have special educational needs and those who are funded by the pupil premium.
- The policy of zero-office time for senior leaders and managers means that, when they are not teaching, they and subject leaders are constantly visiting classes to help staff and provide a visible and supportive presence. They, consequently, know individual students very well.
- The academy's rigorous analysis of students' progress provides all teachers and the governing body with a clear understanding of the academy's performance. Leaders at all levels of management ensure equal opportunity and make the individual student their key focus. The academy's watchword is 'students first' and it is fully applied in practice. The academy's track record, reflected in students' outstanding achievement and highly effective teaching, shows strong capacity for continued improvement.
- The leadership of teaching is outstanding and the academy places a high priority on improving it through high-quality training. Teachers' performance is checked and information is used from observation of their work and from information about students' progress to set teachers challenging targets for improvement. There is a clear understanding that decisions about promotion and pay rates will be based on the impact of teaching on students' progress.
- The Principal of Outwood Academy Portland and the Principal of Outwood Post 16 Centre provide outstanding leadership in the sixth form. The academy rigorously analysed results in 2013 and it introduced close tracking of individual students' progress and provided regular feedback to students encouraging them to develop their research skills. Current indications are that sixth form students are on track to improve their results in 2014.
- The Principal and Executive Principal maintain that there is a distinct difference between Outwood Academy Portland students and others that share the sixth form centre. Inspectors

found a strong ethos established by the end of Key Stage 4, by which Portland had instilled learning habits that contributed to sixth form students' exceptional progress from having overcome often difficult circumstances in their earlier career. This sense of purpose has been established through the care, guidance and support from their teachers throughout their time in the academy.

- The sixth form gives students the opportunity to develop personal, academic and vocational interests. For example, many support charities, hold internships with local businesses and take up apprenticeships financially supported by the academy. Collaborative working with North Nottinghamshire College enhances the curriculum offer and students' satisfaction in this arrangement was evident. The partnership with the local college enables students to pursue vocational options. Innovation via the 'Careers Academy Programme' provides impartial information, advice and guidance to students. Employability courses are available for some Year 13 tutor groups. One aspect of raising post-16 aspirations is by having all Year 12 students spend a day at a local university.
- Teachers and support staff comment positively about the opportunities they have for regular training to develop their skills. The impact of this training is reflected in the high quality of teaching and support seen in lessons; staff morale is high.
- The curriculum in the main academy is flexible and well planned and enables students to achieve their best. It is flexible across key stages giving each student learning opportunities designed for them individually. For example, early entry to GCSE examinations is helpful to more-able students in helping them to prepare directly for AS-level study. The care for the individual is exemplified by the academy's willingness to make curriculum adjustments to accommodate individuals. A variety of vocational options, for example hairdressing, are offered alongside academic subjects.
- There are many opportunities for students' to pursue personal interests outside the main timetable. For example, many take part in music and sport at the very highest level. They have opportunities to visit places of worship. Small acts of kindness are recognised and celebrated – the 'student tree' – and provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional.
- The academy reaches out to the local community to build a relationship with its parents some of whom are difficult to reach. For example, it offers many parent workshops and opportunities for parents to become involved – such as 'bake-offs'. Many parents are regularly involved in supporting units of work at the academy. Adult literacy courses are offered, star-gazing events and other open days are examples of initiatives to enlist parental engagement. Some parents run extra-curricular clubs for students. The academy holds the 'Leading Parent Partnership' award.
- The Outwood Grange Academies Trust is aware of the academy's strengths and areas for development and provides support and challenge. The local authority recognises the strength of the leaders and governors, and has identified the academy as a beacon of good practice. The trust oversees the management of finance and resources expertly.

The governance of the school:

- The local governing body challenges academy leaders and holds them to account for students' achievement. By analysing the available data on students' attainment and progress, it compares the academy's performance with that of schools nationally. Leaders and managers are challenged to maintain standards.
- Governors also strongly support the academy and its leaders. They have a clear insight into the quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning. Checking on the performance of staff is divided between the local and overarching academy trust, and is effective and

rigorous in ensuring that the salary progression of staff is justified by students' progress and achievement.

- Governors check carefully on the use of additional funds from the pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' funding in improving the achievement of eligible students. Governors rigorously check on health and safety and safeguarding practice and, as a result, safeguarding procedures meet current legal requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138248
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	424944

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
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	1190
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeanette Hercun
Executive Principal	Paul Tarn
Principal	Philip Smith
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01909 471010
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