

Ormiston Denes Academy

Yarmouth Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 4AH

Inspection dates

26–27 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have successfully improved teaching and raised standards for most pupils. However, in doing so, inspectors judge that leaders have failed to pay due regard to the achievement, welfare and safety of a small but significant number of pupils.
- Leaders cannot guarantee the safeguarding of pupils educated out of school, but remaining on the school's roll, because contact between the school and these pupils is too infrequent.
- The persistent absence of a group of pupils, often those eligible for the pupil premium and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), has been too high for too long. The school's misuse of attendance reporting has disguised the issue.
- A significant minority of pupils are not making good progress, because they are either not in lessons or in school. They do not benefit from the school's effective subject specialist teaching. Fixed-term exclusions remain above average.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and other leaders have shown determination to raise attainment.
- Pupils, parents, governors and staff agree that behaviour in lessons, around the school and outside school has improved significantly under the current leadership. Pupils in school are safe. Typically, learning is free of interruption and low-level disruption is rare.
- The promotion of literacy is central to the school's work. Pupils' skills in reading and writing are developed well and there is good attention given to the development of vocabulary. Confidence in speaking has not yet received as much attention.
- Most pupils now make progress that is at least in line with other pupils nationally. This includes disadvantaged pupils.
- The improvement of teaching and learning is at the heart of leaders' work and the performance management of staff. Most teaching is good. There is effective work addressing the remaining inconsistencies between subjects.
- Support for pupils' next steps in education or towards employment, including careers information, guidance and support, is very effective.
- Over the last two years, leaders have improved the school's reputation with pupils, parents, carers and the local community. After several years of decline, the roll is rising. Over nine out of ten parents would recommend the school.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders at all levels make decisions that are, at all times, in the best interests of individual pupils.
- Improve attendance by:
 - aligning the school's resources with its most urgent priority to meet the educational, emotional and mental health needs of all its pupils
 - working collaboratively with external organisations to tackle non-attendance so that all pupils receive the education to which they are entitled
 - ensuring that registration is accurate so that there is correct information about the pupils who are present and those who are absent in order to monitor the safeguarding and well-being of all pupils on the school's role.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring that all pupils benefit from the good teaching through regular attendance in class
 - improving pupils' confidence and skills in speaking in a wide range of contexts
 - improving weaker provision so that the pupils have the opportunity to achieve equally well across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders have driven a rise in attainment that has benefited most pupils in the school. They have created a positive culture of behaviour, enabling teachers to teach well and most pupils to make good progress. They have achieved this without paying due regard to the needs of some of their most vulnerable pupils.
- Leaders do not always make decisions that are in the best interests of individual pupils. For example:
 - Some pupils who were attending Suffolk Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) remained dual registered at both the school and the PRU, in key stage 3 and Year 10. However, the decision to remove these pupils from the school's roll at the start of Year 11 was taken in the best interests of the school rather than of the pupils. This constitutes 'off-rolling' according to Ofsted's definition. This process is well established at the school. The lead inspector confirmed with the local authority that the school is following local practice rather than statutory guidance.
 - Leaders check on the safety, attendance and behaviour of pupils who attend alternative provision. However, they do not support well enough the needs of pupils with informal arrangements to not be in school, particularly those with SEND, those eligible for pupil premium and those with low prior attainment.
 - A number of pupils have a reduced timetable in an attempt to manage their mental health or other special needs. Fifteen of these pupils are not in school at all. These pupils are incorrectly recorded on the register as having approved absence to attend alternative educational provision. In fact, they are left to work at home unsupervised. Leaders argue that this arrangement is necessary because there is no appropriate provision in the area for these pupils. By avoiding correct procedures, the needs of these pupils are not being met, including their safeguarding.
 - Inspectors investigated the reasons for the large number of leavers and new starters during the academic year. Some left to be home educated. Governors monitor the reasons for these moves, but do not analyse whether there are patterns of groups of pupils leaving the school.
- The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are very positive. However, some parents were negative about the school's provision for pupils with SEND. Typical of this small number of negative comments was, 'The school concentrates too much on achieving good results while not supporting those who need the most help.'
- The principal and senior leaders are intent on providing the best possible education for pupils. Those responsible for oversight of the school have not provided enough challenge and support to ensure that pupils' attendance is recorded accurately.
- The spending of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils is now used well to remove barriers to learning for pupils. This is an innovation resulting from the

work of newly appointed senior leaders. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is central to the concerns of teaching staff. Catch-up funding is used well to help pupils in Year 7 who have fallen behind.

- Leaders have placed the development of teaching and learning at the heart of the school. They commit resources to providing opportunities for teachers to learn from one another's practice. Reminders of the school's basic expectations are reinforced through pre-school briefings. Performance management is used effectively to identify teachers' strengths and areas for development and to establish action plans requiring teachers to observe best practice.
- Leaders have worked effectively to address areas for improvement from the previous inspection and the subsequent monitoring visit. For example, the development of middle leadership to drive improvements in subjects was identified as an area for improvement in the monitoring visit that took place a year ago. This is now a strength. Leaders have shown their ability and determination to work effectively to address weaknesses, which gives confidence in their ability to manage the areas of concern from this inspection.
- Morale among staff is high. Staff spoke to inspectors about how well supported they feel this year. Leaders are careful about managing teachers' workload.
- The multi-academy trust (MAT) provides ongoing support and challenge. MAT staff are frequent visitors helping leaders to train staff, to review teaching and to coach middle leaders. They check safeguarding arrangements but have overlooked the significant gaps in the school's provision and safeguarding procedures for some of their most vulnerable pupils.
- In Years 7 and 8 there is a broad curriculum. In Year 9 this narrows a little, but within broad parameters. In key stage 4, pupils have a wide choice of subjects. The curriculum is regularly reviewed. Recently, the provision for modern foreign languages has been increased so that pupils experience French, German and Spanish in Year 7. Similarly, pupils experience a range of technology subjects before making choices about which to follow. Humanities subjects in key stage 3 are currently taught together, but from September will be taught separately giving more focus to the discrete disciplines of religious education, history and geography. A wide range of enrichment activities are included in the timetable, such as film club, gym and service for elderly people, in addition to mainly sport-orientated extra-curricular activities.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is gaining in confidence to challenge leaders, but the trust and governors have not been robust enough in challenging management decisions and information provided by school leaders.
- Governors have been insufficiently rigorous in ensuring that attendance information is recorded accurately. The division in responsibility between the local governing body and the MAT is not always clear so that the necessary checks have not been completed.
- Governors know and understand how provision for different groups of pupils is improving and can identify areas for further improvement, such as curriculum

adaptations to reflect opportunities in the local labour market and the further promotion of pupils' oracy.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Too many pupils are absent, and staff cannot be confident of their whereabouts and whether they are safe.
- Pupils who are in school say they feel safe, bullying is rare and pupils express confidence that bullying would be dealt with well. The school's logs show few incidents of bullying or racism.
- Staff are well trained in the most up-to-date safeguarding guidance, including 'Prevent', which focuses on preventing pupils from being vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. Staff are aware of the signs of potential abuse and neglect and make appropriate referrals to the designated safeguarding team. However, pupils not in attendance at school do not benefit from staff vigilance in this area and are therefore left vulnerable.
- Pupils learn to keep themselves safe online.
- Safer recruitment policies are implemented well. Child protection files are thorough and show effective work with external agencies when there are concerns about pupils' welfare.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved strongly since the previous inspection. Leadership of teaching is effective, and training for teachers is focused either on developing subject expertise or on the school's priorities for improvement.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge gives pupils confidence. Pupils respect their teachers and value what they have to say. This means that time in lessons is used productively. Very little time is wasted.
- Pupils usually engage quickly and are willing participants in lessons. Relationships with teachers are strong and praise is used to encourage pupils to take an active part in their learning. Expectations of what pupils can do are generally appropriate, but there is insufficient challenge for the most able. Teachers do not routinely ask pupils challenging questions to further their learning.
- At the heart of teaching is the development of subject-specific terminology and the widening of pupils' vocabulary. This is done well. Feedback is in line with school policy. It is particularly effective in subjects such as English. The additional support, such as 'Saturday Schools', is helping pupils to catch up on gaps in their knowledge from the legacy of weaker provision in the past. A group of Year 11 pupils told inspectors that they were full of praise for this provision.
- The impact of better-quality teaching is already seen in improved progress and attainment. As it feeds through, it is anticipated that weekend and holiday interventions will become unnecessary.

- Most teaching is skilful. For example, the impact of English teachers introducing a poem with appropriate context before reading it led to pupils responding well. Pupils' books in English and, for example, geography show evidence of pupils working very hard and producing work of good quality.
- Improvements to the quality of teaching are more established in some subjects, such as English, than in others such as mathematics where there is more inconsistency between classes and year groups. In mathematics, some pupils have insufficient opportunities to practise activities at speed in order to become confident.
- Subjects are at different stages of improvement. The quality of teaching and the resulting progress of pupils is improving across the school because of the effective approaches to staff training and development.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Pupils' welfare is inadequate because a significant number of pupils are not in school and their welfare is not checked regularly enough. Their safeguarding is at risk. Vulnerable pupils are not protected from risks of exploitation.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. For them, personal development and welfare are effective because of the excellent care shown by staff, and particularly the heads of house. Staff know their pupils and pupils' individual circumstances very well.
- Pupils are good ambassadors for their school. They are smart in their uniform, which they wear with pride. In many subjects, such as geography, the pride pupils take in their work as shown in their books is obvious. Pupils are increasingly confident and proud of their school. They show respect for one another's opinions, views and differences.
- The school's work to provide careers information, guidance and support is an impressive part of its work. The school holds the Quality in Careers Standard award at gold level which is being used to provide a coherent framework for work in this area. The school is very far ahead in meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks (the government's expectations of careers provision). All pupils in school have five days of work experience. This, together with targeted guidance, has helped to raise pupils' aspirations. An above-average proportion of pupils continue after Year 11 to education, employment or training.
- The 'Praxis' programme is well planned. It raises pupils' awareness of fundamental British values and enhances pupils' cultural capital by learning about key stories underpinning western civilisation. These include Greek myths or classic works of English literature, such as George Orwell's satire, 'Animal Farm'. Religious education (RE) is taught by staff with a passion to develop pupils' understanding of different beliefs and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. The rigour of the philosophy and RE course taught in Years 7 and 8 is diluted when delivered to pupils in key stage 4 not opting for GCSE in the subject.

- Year 11 pupils were very positive about the school's mentoring programme and the individual support they received from senior staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Despite the positive behaviour of most pupils in school, the number of fixed-term exclusions, while falling, remains above average.
- Attendance figures are incorrect due to inaccurate recording of absence. Currently, 15 pupils are not in school at all. One has been at home for one year and others have been out of school for several months. Other pupils are on part-time timetables and their attendance is also recorded incorrectly. Overall attendance is lower than the official published figure and is below average.
- Attitudes to learning and relationships between staff and pupils are positive. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour in lessons. The high expectations of behaviour were described to inspectors by staff and pupils. Pupils told inspectors that the school's behaviour policy is clear and followed consistently.
- Nonetheless, there are often withdrawals from lessons for misbehaviour. Some take place in the 'reflection room' while others are with a head of department. The number of withdrawals is reduced from the previous year but remains high.
- Significant behavioural challenges in lessons are now rare, so the full effort of teachers is devoted to pupils' learning. Around the school, at break and lunchtimes, pupils get on very well together. The reputation of the school in the community has risen, as pupils' conduct outside school now is creditable.
- Most pupils are proud of their school and treat all staff and visitors with respect and courtesy. They demonstrate excellent manners.
- Discriminatory language is used rarely, if at all. Pupils are encouraged to challenge inappropriate or homophobic language.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Although most pupils who are regularly in school make good progress from their differing starting points, too many pupils, mainly those with SEND, are not in school or in alternative education. Although the school sends work home, the progress of these pupils is less than if they were in school receiving subject specialist teaching.
- The progress of pupils with SEND is too variable because the school's strategies to support these pupils are not applied consistently well.
- There has been a sharp increase in the progress of most pupils over the last three years. In 2018, the progress of pupils was broadly average. Pupils made better progress in English than in mathematics. The strongest progress and attainment were found in subjects that are key stage 4 options. This is because these subjects were largely taught to older pupils while the school has been improving, whereas in the core subjects there is a legacy of weaker provision.

- Stronger teaching this year has ensured that pupils' progress has continued to improve. English remains strong, while progress in mathematics is more variable, but improving.
- The curriculum enables pupils to gain worthwhile qualifications in a wide range of subjects, including vocational and technical options. The popularity of modern foreign languages is increasing, over time markedly raising the proportion of pupils prepared for the EBacc (the government's preferred group of subjects at GCSE) from its current low base. Qualifications in subjects such as financial capability are popular and bring coherence to preparing pupils for adult life.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is now greater than other pupils and in line with other pupils nationally. Their progress has risen sharply because their needs are considered by leaders and teachers more consistently than previously. The barriers to their learning are being tackled.
- As a result of the school's strong careers provision, the proportion of pupils in education, apprenticeships or training after Year 11 is above average.

School details

Unique reference number	139403
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10103374

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	876
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Tina Ellis
Principal	Ben Driver
Telephone number	01502 574 474
Website	www.ormistonden.es.co.uk
Email address	info@ormistonden.es.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 April 2017

Information about this school

- The current principal and senior leadership team have been in place since 2016.
- The school is a member of the Ormiston Academies Trust. There is a local governing body to whom the trustees of the MAT delegate responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the school. The trustees are responsible for compliance with the academy's funding agreement.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- Pupils enter with attainment that is significantly lower than that expected for their age.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was running a time-limited trial of teaching a number of Year 8 boys in a single-sex group for English. This practice is capable of amounting to segregation by gender contrary to the Equality Act 2010. However, the school's rationale for this policy is that boys achieve less well in English than girls and

they want to establish whether they can improve boys' achievement with this approach. Inspectors concluded that segregation by gender is, in this case, reasonable and proportionate to remedy the concerns about boys' achievement. Therefore, it meets the requirements for the positive action exemption under section 158 of the Equality Act 2010 and is not unlawful.

- The school makes use of four other education providers: Harbour PRU, Lowestoft; Old Warren House, Lowestoft; Attic Walpole PRU, Halesworth; and Attic Hillside PRU, Bungay.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence from: lesson observations and short visits to lessons, most carried out with the senior or middle leaders; discussions with pupils and staff; meetings with staff, governors and representatives of the multi-academy trust; reviews of pupils' work in books; reviews of the school's website, documents and assessment information; and general observations of the daily operations of the school, including social areas.
- Inspectors analysed the 112 standard responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 31 written comments received.

Inspection team

Adrian Lyons, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Hutton	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Kerridge	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Hemmings	Her Majesty's Inspector

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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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