

Outwood Academy Valley

Valley Road, Worksop, Nottinghamshire S81 7EN

Inspection dates

23–24 May 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have been relentless in raising standards for all pupils. They have been true to their vision of raising aspirations and maximising pupils' life chances. Examination results are consistently well above those found nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils have made faster progress, year on year, since the last inspection. Many of these pupils outperform other pupils nationally. The progress made by the most able disadvantaged pupils is accelerating and this group are no longer underperforming. Leaders' commitment to raising standards and removing barriers to learning for these pupils is exceptional.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in each year group are above those expected for their age across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported extremely well. They make excellent progress.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' moral and social understanding is developed very well. For some, however, their understanding of the cultures and faiths that make up modern Britain is weaker.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are highly positive. They engage with work set in class diligently and participate in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Attendance is above average. Pupils whose absence rates were previously high are now attending school more regularly.
- The school's behaviour policy is enforced stringently and consistently. Exclusions are now reducing. Pupils' behaviour around the school and in class is impeccable. Mutual respect abounds.
- The school's curriculum is designed extremely well to meet the needs of pupils.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects is secure. This expertise is used well to motivate and challenge pupils to achieve their very best.
- Monitoring and tracking systems provide leaders and those responsible for governance with accurate information about the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment and progress.
- The provision in the sixth form is outstanding. High-quality teaching has led to students making excellent progress.
- Those responsible for governance, particularly the trust board, hold school leaders to account exceptionally well because they are skilled and knowledgeable.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the focused work to support pupils at risk of exclusion to ensure that exclusions from school continue to reduce.
- Create more opportunities for pupils to understand the faiths and cultures that make up modern Britain so they are well prepared for life beyond their local area.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The school's vision of 'students first: raising standards, transforming lives' permeates the day-to-day work and interactions in the school. All leaders have been successful in engendering high expectations for all, so that all pupils, regardless of their backgrounds, excel.
- The executive principal leads this school exceptionally well. His inspirational leadership is valued and respected by all staff and pupils. His strong moral purpose to ensure that no pupil is left behind has led to outstanding outcomes for pupils, giving them essential life chances.
- Disadvantage and special educational needs and/or disability are no barriers to achievement in this school. Strong support systems and careful use of government funding to support these pupils have ensured that most make at least equal progress to that of their peers. The previous underperformance by high-attaining disadvantaged pupils is no longer the case for current pupils.
- Teaching is outstanding. The quality of teaching is rigorously monitored. The support provided for teachers' development is strong and wide ranging. Effective use is made of external expertise from other schools in the trust. Teachers know their subjects exceptionally well and plan their lessons meticulously.
- The school's systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' attainment and progress are highly sophisticated and informative. Through 'Praising Stars' meetings, all teachers are very clear at any time where pupils are according to their expected academic flightpath. Any underachievement is tackled early at these meetings. The school's approaches to intervention and bespoke support for pupils who underperform, especially in key stage 4, are very effective.
- Learning managers are highly effective. Pupils value the support they provide, both academically and emotionally. The leaders' knowledge and understanding of individual pupils' needs are exemplary. The range of support provided for pupils is well established and effective. The Bridge and Vision are bases where teachers and other staff help pupils get the support they need.
- Subject leaders are highly skilled professionals. They carry out their monitoring and development roles extremely well. The 'learning and performance' weekly sessions often involve training delivered by them to improve and sustain the quality of teaching. They invest in their own development as leaders. Many have undertaken additional qualifications in middle and senior leadership.
- Teachers are provided with precise targets for improvement through the appraisal system. These targets link closely to their professional development and pupils' progress. Leaders review these targets meticulously throughout the year. Leaders adhere to strict criteria when considering whether to award pay increases.
- Impartial advice and careers guidance are strengths of the school. The range of support to guide pupils to make their choices for key stage 4 courses and post-16 programmes is comprehensive. Pupils' career aspirations and aptitudes are carefully matched to the suite of courses they choose in both key stages 3 and 4. Pupils know

and understand well the range of post-16 and post-18 employment and further education options available, including apprenticeships. The school has achieved the Career Mark, in recognition of its work to support careers guidance, from its national awarding body.

- Leaders carefully choose alternative education placements for the small number of pupils who would benefit from a therapeutic or vocational education. Records show that these pupils are benefiting from this provision. Their progress is checked carefully. Pupils' attendance and engagement have improved as a result.
- The curriculum is a strong feature of the school. It is well thought out and planned. The academic curriculum has been adapted extremely well to reflect the greater challenge of the new examination requirements in key stage 4. This is especially true of English and mathematics.
- Leaders use catch-up funding well. Pupils who arrive in school with low literacy and numeracy skills are provided with effective support. The majority of these pupils reach the expected standard for their age quickly.
- Leaders have transformed the way they engage with parents. Parents' surveys and high attendance at 'parent voice' meetings indicate a much more positive relationship between parents and the school than previously. Parents' testimonials are highly positive. The school has been recognised for its outstanding work with parents by receiving a Leading Parent Partnership Award.
- The choice of extra-curricular enrichment opportunities for pupils is wide-ranging. In addition to subject and sports clubs, pupils pursue hobbies, such as photography, and enjoy the IT (scratch) club and police club. Participation rates are high. Competitive sport for all levels of ability is encouraged successfully.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of issues related to their personal, social and health education are promoted well through life lessons, assemblies and vertical mentoring group (VMG) sessions. The programme of study to support these aspects of pupils' education is reviewed and adapted regularly and is responsive to pupils' needs. Specifically, a new programme is being introduced to tackle mental health issues which have become concerns among some pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well throughout the school. Pupils are highly attuned to fairness and to what is right or wrong, as these discussions are encouraged during VMG sessions with their tutors. Pupils are encouraged to be socially responsible. Pupils are involved in a range of fund-raising and charity activities throughout the year. These activities are led primarily by the pupil voice group, whose members play an active part in community work.
- Pupils are encouraged to understand the world around them. Each VMG group is linked to a different country and trips to theatres and other countries, like Kenya, have developed pupils' cultural understanding. However, a few pupils showed a limited understanding of the faiths and cultures that make up modern Britain. Leaders acknowledge fully that this is an area for further development to help pupils become properly prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- The academy trust has ensured that all aspects of the work of the school are monitored and overseen very well. The trust board, which is the executive level of governance, is very effective in holding leaders to account. Its ambition and high standards have contributed to increased academic performance year on year since the last inspection. The academy council, the local governing body, has a more limited remit and powers, yet provides the trust board with important information, such as the welfare and well-being of staff and pupils.
- The trust's executive team is made up of skilled and experienced educationalists, some of whom are national leaders of education. They monitor the work of the school and challenge leaders rigorously.
- The trust board deploys external support successfully to drive further improvements, such as the advisory support provided for mathematics and science recently. The directors of subjects are highly skilled and knowledgeable across the trust.
- The performance management of staff and the executive principal is undertaken rigorously. Targets set for the executive principal and other leaders are high. Subject leaders and teachers are stringently held to account for the progress of key groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.
- The pupil premium, catch-up funding for Year 7, and special educational needs and/or disabilities funding is spent wisely. Intervention support is evaluated carefully.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The academy council takes its responsibility to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective very seriously. Leaders' work to safeguard pupils is monitored regularly.
- The safeguarding leaders are trained well and experienced in safeguarding legislation and child protection. They meticulously monitor pupils at risk and those likely to be at risk. Staff are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities because safeguarding training for staff is clear and policies are simple and effective. They are vigilant to signs of abuse.
- The documentation to record the range of support provided for pupils who have been referred to the local authority is very detailed and informative. All safeguarding leaders know and understand the needs of pupils extremely well. Pupils are kept safe and exceptionally well supported.
- The curriculum to support pupils and keep them safe is reviewed regularly. Safeguarding leaders, for example, have been instrumental in implementing the programme of study to support pupils' mental health. Safeguarding leaders recognise the local risks to pupils, including those posed by extremism.
- Pupils feel safe in the school and they are confident that the adults in the school will help and support them if they have a worry.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching is consistently strong across nearly all subjects, especially in English and mathematics. Pupils' rapid progress is testament to the strong and effective features of teaching throughout the school.
- Teachers are experts in their subject. They use their secure knowledge to plan interesting and relevant learning for all pupils. For example, opportunities to explore contemporary issues of poverty and deprivation are taken when studying 'A Christmas Carol' in English lessons. Pupils' empathy skills are developed well. In geography, work on migration is used to discuss current issues about refugees to Britain. Teachers challenge stereotypes well through their subject teaching.
- Teachers plan their lessons meticulously. They consider pupils' previous achievement and gaps in their knowledge carefully. The most able pupils are provided with 'challenge and aspire' tasks in every lesson. In English and mathematics in key stage 4, teachers use pupils' results in specimen examinations astutely throughout the year to gauge gaps in their knowledge. This helps them to plan for future lessons.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively. They ask good questions and encourage positive engagement. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with expert support, which has contributed to their excellent progress.
- Teachers consistently engender mutual respect in the classroom. Pupils work in a calm and hardworking environment. This has contributed to the rapid progress made by most pupils.
- Pupils are encouraged to ask questions and to check their understanding regularly throughout lessons. Pupils feel secure in letting staff know if they do not understand something.
- Teachers take regular opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills. Subject vocabulary and writing skills are developed well across the curriculum. Teaching assistants, focused interventions and effective numeracy programmes have improved pupils' basic arithmetic skills very well.
- Teachers ensure that their assessments of pupils' work are reliable and verified. Teachers make excellent use of colleagues in other schools in the trust to standardise test results and validate their judgements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils' attitudes and relationships are exemplary and enable them to thrive and make outstanding progress.
- Pupils are kind, thoughtful and respectful towards adults, each other and especially towards those who are different from themselves. Pupils who speak English as an additional language report that they are welcomed and treated very well. Incidents of prejudice-based behaviour are rare.

- Bullying is rare, but on the very few occasions when it does occur, pupils are confident that it will be resolved quickly.
- Pupils are secure in their understanding of the risks to their safety, such as when using the internet and social media. They know how to report harassment, bullying or potential online grooming.
- Pupils are highly aware of their social responsibility. A recent campaign by the pupil voice group initiated a shoebox collection in aid of homeless people. Fund-raising and charity appeals are regular features of pupils' community work.
- All pupils are required to commit to 10 pledges which contribute to developing them as citizens and rounded individuals. Pupils speak positively about these challenges, especially in improving their confidence.
- Pupils' participation in extra-curricular enrichment activities is high. They value the wide range of opportunities available to them.
- The vast majority of pupils demonstrate high regard for their own work, taking pride in their books and responding well to the challenge given to them by teachers.
- While pupils do not know the term 'British values', they model these values well in their everyday interactions and attitudes. They are tolerant of others who may share a different culture or lifestyle to themselves. They respect democracy and the rule of law.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour throughout the inspection was impeccable. The vast majority of pupils respect and understand the school's strict rules. They recognise the many benefits that come from adhering to the rules of the school, including excellent examination results. The school's records show that low-level disruption in class is rare.
- Pupils' who had previously poor behaviour, and struggled to accept the school's strict behaviour rules, have been supported well to improve it. Leaders recognise, however, that a small minority of pupils continue to flout the rules. Last year, pupils who received fixed-term exclusions were not disadvantaged, as they all made good progress because of the support they received.
- Pupils' attendance was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Currently, the attendance is better than the national average. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has rapidly improved. The absence rates of disadvantaged pupils are reducing year on year.
- Pupils come to school prepared, with the right equipment and they wear their uniforms smartly.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, has been significantly above the national level. In 2016, pupils leaving Year 11 who had low and middle prior attainment achieved standards much higher than national averages for pupils with the same starting points.

- Pupils' attainment in both English and mathematics is consistently well above average.
- In 2016, more than the national average proportion of pupils was entered for English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects. Pupils' attainment in these subjects, at grades A* to C, has been above average since the last inspection.
- As a result of focused work to increase the challenge for the most able pupils, attainment for this group of pupils has been consistently above the national average. The difference between the attainment of high-ability disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally was narrow in 2014 and 2015. Specific medical problems for a few pupils led to a dip in performance for this group in 2016, but the school's assessment records for current pupils in this group show a continuing trend upwards.
- The value the school adds to pupils' academic performance from the time they start at the school to the time they leave is considerable. In 2016, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, made significantly better progress than the national average across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. The progress pupils made in non-EBacc subjects, including vocational subjects, was also significantly above national averages.
- Current information shows that pupils continue to make outstanding progress throughout the school in each year group. The school is meticulous in catching those pupils who underperform early, so that they do not have to remain behind for too long. This strategy has been successful in helping pupils to make the progress they should.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported extremely well. The very small number of pupils with an education, health and care plan receive specialist support and make good progress. Other pupils who receive support make better progress than other pupils from the same starting points.
- The small numbers of pupils who receive full- and part-time education through alternative provision have improved their attendance and behaviour as a result of the work carried out to support them. They are now making faster progress.
- A strong culture of reading is promoted across the school. Pupils read widely and often. Their skills in reading rapidly improve as a result of regular and focused support.
- Pupils are incredibly well prepared for the future. At each stage of their education, school leaders provide pupils with excellent guidance and support to help them make the right choices for the next stage. Pupils' aptitudes and interests are considered carefully when course choices are made. Pupils pursue academic as well as vocational courses, and do well in both. A high proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, gain good qualifications in English and mathematics, giving them access to a wide range of career choices. The number of pupils taking up apprenticeships is increasing. All pupils move to post-18 employment, education or training.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Students make outstanding progress in the sixth form in all subjects. Sixth-form provision is successful and continues to improve.
- Leaders of the sixth form know and understand the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes extremely well and provide students with the support they need.

- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching extremely well and work closely with subject leaders to ensure that the curriculum provided is suitably challenging. Outstanding teaching has led to exceptional outcomes.
- Disadvantaged students are supported through the school's bursary provision and their progress is monitored carefully. Just as in the main school, each disadvantaged student is carefully tracked to ensure that they make the progress they should. These students are quickly improving the progress they make compared with others.
- The proportion of students reaching the high grades A* and A is rapidly increasing.
- The very small minority of pupils who retook their GCSE examinations last year in English and mathematics increased their grade.
- The retention rates and attendance rates in the sixth form are very high, demonstrating how much students value the sixth form and what it offers them.
- Students engage in a range of subjects to ensure that they are prepared well for adulthood. Fund-raising activities and visits to local councillors help them to know and understand their contribution to society. All those eligible have registered to vote in the forthcoming elections.
- Students are also prepared well for the world of work. Their work experience placements and contact with local businesses have helped them to be successful at interviews.
- The vast majority of students last year went on to the post-18 destination of their choice. Many went to universities, including those within the Russell Group.
- The school met the government's interim minimum standards in 2016.

School details

Unique reference number	138247
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	10031404

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1344
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	393
Appropriate authority	The trust board
Chair	Steve Merrick
Principal	Dr Philip Smith (executive principal)
Telephone number	01909 475121
Website	www.valley.outwood.com
Email address	enquiries@valley.outwood.com
Date of previous inspection	11–12 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- In 2016, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 11.
- The school is sponsored by Outwood Grange Academy Trust.

- It is much larger than the average-size secondary school.
- The executive principal of the school is also the principal of the neighbouring school within the academy trust, the Outwood Academy Portland. The school also shares its sixth form with this school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is similar to the national average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and pupils who speak English as an additional language are much lower than national averages.
- A lower proportion of pupils have special education needs and/or disabilities compared with the national average, including those who have an education, health and care plan and those who just receive additional support.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision on a part-time or full-time basis at Fountaindale School HRET, APE and First Class.
- The school has a reciprocal arrangement with Outwood Academy Portland to temporarily educate a small number of pupils on the other academy site.
- The chief executive, the regional executive and the executive principal of the trust are national leaders of education. They provide expertise and support to the school.
- The academy council, the local governing body, is led by an experienced governor who is overseen by the trust board, whose chair is a national leader of governance.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was originally carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. Inspectors converted the inspection to a section 5 in order to gather more secure evidence about the quality of education at the school.
- Inspectors observed learning in 38 lessons, nearly all of which involved joint observations with a senior leader. Five vertical mentoring group (VMG) sessions were also observed. Inspectors also visited The Bridge and Vision, which are bases to provide intensive work to support pupils.
- Discussions were held with the principal, other senior leaders, members of the executive board of the trust, including the chief executive officer, three members of the academy council (the local governing body), subject leaders of EBacc subjects, the special educational needs coordinator, and leaders in charge of behaviour and teaching.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work, and scrutinised the school's improvement plans and leaders' self-evaluation, information about pupils' attainment and progress, policies and minutes of meetings of the academy council and other documentation.
- No responses were received to the online questionnaires for parents, staff or pupils during the inspection. Forty-two historic responses to Parent View, made prior to this inspection, were evaluated. Inspectors evaluated the responses to a range of surveys of pupils, staff and parents conducted by the school.

Inspection team

Zarina Connolly, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Spoons	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Sheppard	Ofsted Inspector
Ellenor Beighton	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Hunt	Ofsted Inspector
Nigel Boyd	Ofsted Inspector
Laurence Reilly	Ofsted Inspector

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