

Inspection of Outwood Academy Riverside

100 Russell Street, Middlehaven, Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire TS1 2AD

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2023

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff at Outwood Academy Riverside are united in their commitment to the diverse range of pupils who attend their school. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' conduct. They have created strong routines that help the majority of pupils to meet these expectations. Staff provide excellent pastoral support. They support pupils well and encourage them to become polite and resilient young adults.

Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and respectful. Bullying is rare. When it does occur, staff take effective action to ensure issues are resolved. There are clear rewards and sanctions in place as part of a school-wide behaviour policy. However, behaviour in lessons and in corridors does not always meet the high standards set by leaders. All staff do not use the rewards and behaviour policies consistently. Some low-level disruption impacts upon pupils' learning.

Pupils benefit from a wide variety of opportunities that enrich their education. Regular health and well-being sessions are provided for all pupils by local sports professionals. Pupils learn about the importance of mental health, staying safe and eating a balanced diet. Speech and language classes help pupils to present themselves confidently and communicate their ideas clearly. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have taken into account what pupils already know and can do when designing the curriculum. What pupils will learn and in what order is clearly set out. Opportunities for pupils to re-visit prior learning are embedded. In some subjects, such as music, curriculum planning is not as well developed as it is elsewhere. Where this is the case, pupils experience a less-coherent curriculum. This leads to pupils having a weaker understanding of the important knowledge they require at each stage of the curriculum.

Staff are passionate and knowledgeable about their subjects. They are enthusiastic about engaging pupils in their learning. However, the way in which the curriculum is taught varies across the school. In some subjects, the impact of the curriculum is far more secure because staff have made stronger activity choices and given adequate opportunity for pupils to embed their learning. In other subjects, pupils' recall of what they have previously learned is much more variable. This reduces the impact of leaders' intended curriculum.

Staff regularly assess what pupils know and can do in the majority of subjects. They use effective questioning in lessons to identify where pupils might have gaps in their knowledge. Where this is most effective, pupils are beginning to make stronger links in their learning. However, between some subjects, inconsistencies exist.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Staff understand how to adapt lessons to meet the needs of

these pupils well. Leaders monitor the quality of provision for pupils with SEND and provide ongoing training for staff.

Reading is a priority across the school. Staff read with pupils regularly and focus on important vocabulary in lessons. Pupils at an early stage of learning to read receive additional support to help them catch up with their peers. Pupils who speak English as an additional language work with support staff who have specialist training, to help them overcome any language barriers they might face.

Leaders ensure all pupils have access to a broad, rich set of experiences beyond the classroom. A number of clubs, such as chess, robotics and several sports, are on offer to pupils. Trips to the theatre, residential to nearby coastal locations and visiting speakers all help to develop pupils' cultural understanding. The curriculum for personal, social and health education is well considered. Lessons include important messages about different religions and British values. However, pupils' understanding of some topics in this curriculum is limited. Leaders know this is the case and have plans to address these gaps in knowledge.

Staff working at the school feel well supported by senior leaders. They value the professional development opportunities they are provided. Ongoing monitoring of the school's curriculum, pupils' behaviour and personal development has identified some areas for improvement. Senior leaders have a stronger understanding of these than some middle leaders do. Those responsible for governance also know the school's priorities. They ensure that the resources and personnel are available to continue to grow the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a highly effective culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff understand the risks posed to vulnerable pupils and their families. Information about pupils who may be at risk of harm is quickly shared with leaders. Work with external agencies and the community also helps to mitigate risk.

Ongoing training for staff and governors ensures that they understand the risks pupils might face inside and outside of school. Pupils are taught how to stay safe in person and online. Visits from local charities and the police support the important messages within the curriculum. Leaders respond to local and national safeguarding concerns rapidly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' learning experience in lessons is inconsistent across several subjects. The way in which the curriculum is implemented, including teachers' pedagogical choices, approaches to assessment and expectations of what pupils can, and do, produce, is too variable. As a result, pupils do not learn the intended curriculum as well as they might. Some pupils do not have a strong understanding of what they have learned or what they need to do to improve. Curriculum leaders should ensure quality assurance processes precisely identify teachers that would benefit from further training to ensure pupils' learning experiences are as positive as they can be.
- Pupils' behaviour, both inside and outside of the classroom, does not always meet leaders' high expectations. In some lessons, staff do not use the school's approach to rewards and sanctions consistently. This sometimes leads to low-level disruption that impacts negatively on pupils' education. Leaders should ensure that all staff understand how to use the school's behaviour policy effectively. Leaders should closely monitor the impact of this work to ensure a positive behaviour culture is embedded across the school.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 147848 |
| Local authority | Middlesbrough |
| Inspection number | 10255587 |
| Type of school | Secondary Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy free school |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 445 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | David Earnshaw |
| Principal | Melissa Brant-Smith |
| Website | www.riverside.outwood.com |
| Date of previous inspection | Not applicable |

Information about this school

- The school currently educates pupils in Years 7 to 9 only, having opened to pupils in 2020.
- The school is part of the Outwood Academies Trust.
- The school makes use of one off-site provider of alternative education. This is a registered provider and subject to inspection by Ofsted.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders and representatives of the trust. Inspectors spoke to teaching and non-teaching staff, in addition to representatives of the local governing body and trust board. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer.
- To evaluate the quality of education, deep dives were carried out in English, mathematics, music and geography. Inspectors spoke with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at books and spoke to both pupils and staff.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experience in lessons, enrichment opportunities and what it is like to attend the school.
- Inspectors met with early career teachers and those who mentor them.
- Inspectors examined the schools' behaviour records, spoke to pupils who had been suspended from school and spoke with providers of alternative education.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator. They looked at a range of documentation, including education, health and care plans and individual learning plans. Inspectors also checked how pupils with SEND are supported in lessons. One inspector visited the nurture classroom within the school.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including checks made on all adults who come on to the school site. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff to ensure their understanding of safeguarding procedures. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to check on their work to keep pupils safe in school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| John Linkins, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Andrew Gibbins | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Rebekah Taylor | Ofsted Inspector |

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