

Inspection of Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy

Barnfield Avenue, Murdishaw, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 6EP

Inspection dates: 10–11 December 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The last academic year at this school has been a turbulent and unsettling one for staff and pupils. There have been high levels of staff absence. This has compounded the persistently poor progress made by pupils in subjects such as English, mathematics and science by the time that they leave Year 11. Leaders and teachers do not have high enough expectations for pupils' academic success.

Most pupils said that they feel safe in school. However, vulnerable pupils do not receive the support that they need quickly enough. A few pupils said that there are occasions when they do not feel safe. This is because of the poor behaviour of others. That said, behaviour has improved significantly since September 2019.

Pupils reported that there is some bullying in the school and that inappropriate language, such as that which is homophobic, is heard. Even so, most pupils said that inappropriate language and bullying are dealt with appropriately.

Students in the sixth form fare better than those in key stages 3 and 4. Provision in this part of the school is improving due to better leadership. Students do particularly well on vocational programmes.

Pupils can attend a range of extra-curricular clubs for performing arts, languages, music, art and sport.

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

The curriculum is not designed or implemented effectively. It does not enable pupils to gain the knowledge and skills that they require to achieve highly. Over recent years, pupils have attained significantly less well than others nationally in English, mathematics, science, humanities and modern foreign languages.

New leaders in English, mathematics and science are giving greater consideration to what pupils should learn in these subjects. However, these plans are in the very early stages of implementation. Consequently, they have had little impact and pupils continue to receive an unacceptable quality of education. The key stage 3 curriculum is not fit for purpose. It lacks breadth and ambition. Pupils experience a narrow curriculum in Year 9. Leaders have taken steps to change this, but it is too soon to see a significant impact.

The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is not appropriate. These pupils do not receive the specific or targeted support that they need. This is particularly the case for those who find reading and writing difficult.

In recent years, leaders have attempted to systematically 'game' examination results by entering all pupils in key stage 4 for two vocational courses. This was not done in pupils' educational best interest. It was done primarily for the school's benefit

because it artificially inflated the school's overall progress score and partially concealed how poorly pupils had achieved in English, mathematics and science. This practice has now stopped. However, pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 are still studying for these qualifications because of decisions taken by leaders in the past.

Pupils' overall attendance is low. This is largely due to a relatively small number of complex cases, which includes some pupils who currently refuse to attend school. Leaders' strategies to re-engage these pupils have, so far, been unsuccessful. That said, many pupils have a very high attendance record.

Pupils' behaviour is not good. Staff reported that last year, much of their time was taken up by dealing with disruptive behaviour. This had a negative impact on staff morale and well-being. It also contributed to high levels of staff absence. This academic year, pupils' behaviour has improved. Most staff are now managing behaviour more effectively. This, in part, is because sanctions, including exclusions, are being used appropriately.

Pupils typically behave well when learning in vocational subjects. This is because they are engaged in their learning and they get on well with their teachers, who have high expectations of their effort and behaviour. However, in other subjects, pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently strong. Pupils told us that there is low-level disruption in their lessons. Inspectors saw pupils behaving well and politely in many lessons. However, pupils' attitudes to learning vary considerably.

The quality of the curriculum in the sixth form is better than in key stages 3 and 4. Leaders have given more thought to how the curriculum is designed and implemented to meet students' needs. Students achieve well on vocational courses. Achievement on academic courses is more variable. Students make strong progress in some subjects such as fine art. However, in a number of subjects, including English, they underachieve. Students' attitudes to learning are generally positive. They receive good-quality careers advice and guidance. Students also benefit from work experience in Year 12 and a range of enrichment activities and educational visits. Most go on to higher education, employment or training.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned programme for form time and assemblies. This gives pupils an understanding of a range of topics, including mental health and British values. The after-school enrichment programme provides many opportunities for pupils to continue with their academic studies or to enjoy art, take part in musicals or compete for the school's sports teams. However, leaders do not do enough to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND take advantage of this wide range of extra-curricular activities. The planned curriculums for religious education and personal, social and health education further enhance pupils' personal development.

The governing body was replaced before the start of the current school year. Governors are now providing robust challenge to senior leaders for the low standards that pupils achieve. It is, however, too early to see the impact.

The interim principal is providing much-needed stability and is addressing concerns about staff well-being and pupils' behaviour. However, despite this, leaders and managers are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. Standards have declined since the previous inspection. Pupils' behaviour is no longer good, safeguarding is ineffective, and leaders acknowledge that the school will need a lot of external support to make the improvements that are needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders do not respond to serious child protection concerns quickly enough. Pupils, some of whom are extremely vulnerable, do not receive the support that they need. External agencies are not involved as quickly as they should be. Where staff have rightly reported concerns about a pupil, records show a lack of action from leaders to safeguard the pupil effectively. Record keeping is incomplete. Staff are not appropriately trained to keep pupils safe. Leaders have not assessed the risk for students in the sixth form who leave the school site during the school day. The single central record of pre-employment checks carried out by the school does not meet requirements.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not achieve as they should across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. This is because the implementation of the curriculum is haphazard. The key stage 3 curriculum lacks ambition and the Year 9 curriculum is unnecessarily narrowed. Leaders should review the key stage 3 curriculum to ensure that there is an adequate level of breadth and ambition that at least matches the scope of the national curriculum. Leaders must ensure that the new curriculum plans are implemented well in all subjects.
- Pupils with SEND do not benefit from an appropriate curriculum. These pupils do not receive the support to which they are entitled. This is the result of weak oversight of this aspect of the school's work over time. Leaders should ensure that staff are given appropriate strategies, training and resources to adequately support pupils with SEND so that they can access a broad and ambitious curriculum and achieve well.
- Safeguarding is ineffective. Leaders do not respond to serious concerns in a timely manner. They do not involve external agencies as they should. Record keeping is incomplete. Staff training has limited impact because those who are absent do not receive the training within a reasonable time of returning to work. The single central record does not meet requirements. Leaders should strengthen the culture of safeguarding by ensuring that all staff are trained appropriately,

external agencies are involved in a timely manner, and safeguarding records are kept meticulously.

- Improved leadership in the sixth form has improved the quality of the provision in this part of the school. Students achieve well on vocational courses. However, achievement in academic subjects remains variable. Leaders must ensure that the curriculum is implemented well in all academic subjects to enable students to make the best possible progress.
- There is a varied enrichment programme in the school. However, leaders do not do enough to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND benefit from these experiences. Leaders should do more to encourage these pupils to take part in the wide programme of extra-curricular activities.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' behaviour. While many pupils have a positive attitude to learning, this is not always the case. This means that learning is sometimes disrupted, particularly in key stage 3. Leaders should build on the successes they have already had in this area to improve pupils' behaviour further throughout the school.
- Overall, pupils' attendance is below the national average. This is largely due to a relatively small number of complex cases, which includes a number of pupils who currently refuse to attend school. Despite this, half of pupils have 100% attendance for the current school year. Leaders should continue to build on the positive work of the attendance team to ensure that a greater proportion of pupils improve their attendance, particularly those who are persistently absent.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

Unique reference number	136185
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10121988
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,131
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Robert Pritchard
Principal	Tony Rawdin (interim)
Website	www.ormistonbolingbrokeacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 October–1 November 2017

Information about this school

- In August 2019, the members of the governing body were removed from their posts and a new governing body was put in place in early September. The chair of governors was appointed in September 2019. The school is scheduled to convert to become a member of Ormiston Academies Trust on 1 February 2020.
- The interim principal took up his post towards the end of October 2019.
- The school uses three alternative providers to contribute to pupils' education: Harmonize Academy, Positive Future Consultancy and Horizons.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

It is recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

- We met with members of the governing body, the interim principal, the two associate vice-principals, and five assistant principals. We also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- We looked at the following subjects in detail: English, mathematics, science and history. In these subjects, we met with subject leaders, scrutinised curriculum planning, made visits to lessons, spoke with teachers whose lessons were visited, and met with a selection of pupils.
- To make a judgement about safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record and scrutinised child protection records. We spoke with a broad range of pupils across all key stages and had a discussion with a representative from the local authority. We scrutinised records of staff safeguarding training, a sample of staff personnel files and other documentation pertaining to safeguarding.
- We also looked at a range of documentation, including minutes of governors' meetings, assembly schedules and curriculum planning for personal development. We scrutinised records pertaining to self-evaluation and school improvement. We also considered records and documentation relating to attendance, bullying and behaviour.
- The views of 47 parents and carers who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and others who contacted or spoke to inspectors, were taken into account. This included the 46 free-text responses that were made by parents during the inspection. We took account of 46 responses to the staff questionnaire and 66 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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