

Inspection of Oxclose Community Academy

Dilston Close, Oxclose Village, Washington, Tyne and Wear NE38 0LN

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 November 2024

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Amanda Parkes. This school is part of the Laidlaw Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sally Newton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Susanna Kempe.

What is it like to attend this school?

Oxclose Community Academy is an inclusive and welcoming place. Pupils enjoy attending this school and they feel safe. The school's ethos of 'value diversity, strive for excellence' is central to all that it does. Pupils respect one another. Discrimination is not tolerated. Pupils are well-mannered and polite, both during lessons and at social times. Staff form strong relationships with pupils and care deeply about their well-being. This allows pupils from all backgrounds to become more confident and independent.

The school has high expectations for pupils' academic and wider achievements. There is a broad personal development and careers programme, which means that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training. As a result, most pupils now remain in their chosen pathway when they leave school.

Pupils, parents and carers speak positively about the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and activities on offer. These reflect the school's ethos and include clubs such as 'Girls Enjoying Maths', 'Rockin' Readers' and 'The Great Oxclose Bake Off'. Pupils are keen to help others through volunteering. For example, each year they organise and run a Christmas party for elderly residents from the local community.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum has been reviewed and adapted so that this ambition is realised consistently. There have been significant improvements in several subjects. These have been well supported by the recent move to join the trust. In recent years, an increased number of pupils have chosen to take modern foreign languages and this is now more central to the key stage 4 curriculum. The school has carefully identified the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn in each subject. This is taught in a logical order, which helps pupils to build their expertise over time.

The school provides effective training for staff. This enables teachers to implement the curriculum appropriately. Teachers use questions well to check what pupils know. For example, through using the 'Oxclose Memory Generator' recall activities, teachers routinely check pupils' understanding of previous learning before moving on to new content. However, sometimes teachers do not use this information to adapt activities in a way that helps pupils to deepen their knowledge as much as they could.

The school has an effective programme to support pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. This helps these pupils to access the school's curriculum successfully. Many pupils enjoy reading, and they benefit from visits to the school's vibrant and well-resourced library. Older pupils support younger pupils, with some acting as reading mentors. They speak proudly about these roles.

Pupils with SEND are identified accurately. The school supports them well to ensure that they can access the curriculum in all subjects confidently. Pupils in the school's resourced provision study the full curriculum. They are fully integrated into school life.

A focus on 'relentless routines' supports pupils to behave respectfully. The school analyses patterns in behaviour and attendance well, using this insight to make further improvements. Pupils' attendance has reduced in recent years. Consequently, the school has revised its attendance strategy. This is beginning to show a positive impact. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is lower than that of other pupils.

The school's personal development programme is comprehensive. It is responsive to local issues. Pupils have a secure understanding of important themes such as discrimination, consent and healthy lifestyles. They show high levels of respect for people of other races and religions. A high-quality 'aspire' careers programme is in place, which includes careers fairs, one-to-one interviews and taught lessons. This supports pupils to go on to suitable education, employment or training.

Governors and trustees have an appropriate overview of the school. The recent move to join the trust has created greater leadership capacity. Most parents say many positive things about the school. However, some feel that communication needs to be improved, particularly when they raise an issue or concern. School leaders consider staff's workload and well-being. Staff feel valued and motivated. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teachers move pupils' learning on too quickly. Where this happens, pupils do not deepen or extend their knowledge and understanding of the different concepts taught. The school should make sure that all staff adapt their teaching effectively to allow all pupils to learn securely.
- The attendance of some pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, is not as high as it could be. This means that these pupils are missing out on valuable learning time. The school should embed the revised attendance strategy effectively to ensure that all pupils attend more frequently.
- Some parents feel that the school's communication processes are not always effective. Consequently, they are not always positive about the school's actions and decisions. The school should ensure that communication supports all parents to engage positively and fully in their children's education.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138923
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10346469
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,113
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Susanna Kempe
CEO of the trust	Sally Newton
Headteacher	Amanda Parkes
Website	www.oxclosecommunity.laidlawschoolstrust.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Laidlaw Schools Trust in July 2024. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was part of the Discover Learning Trust.
- The headteacher began in her post in April 2024.
- The school hosts an additionally resourced provision on behalf of Sunderland local authority. This specialises in support for pupils with physical disability. There are currently 12 places within this provision.
- The school uses one registered provider of alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior staff, including those with responsibility for SEND, safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and personal development. They also met with the CEO of the trust and other trust leaders.
- The lead inspector met with members of the board of trustees and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in history and science.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone with staff at the alternative provision.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes of local governing body meetings and the school's self-evaluation and development plan.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online staff and pupil questionnaires. They also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

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