

Inspection of Oulder Hill Leadership Academy

Hudsons Walk, Rochdale, Lancashire OL11 5EF

Inspection dates:	7 and 8 January 2025
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

The principal of this school is Adrian Smale. This school is part of Star Academies, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sir Mufti Hamid Patel CBE, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kamruddin Kothia OBE DL. There is also an executive principal, Enass Al-Ani, who is responsible for this school and two others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel proud to belong to this harmonious and welcoming school community. At the foundation of this community is a culture of respect. Pupils are considerate and kind towards each other. Many said that this gives them freedom to be themselves.

Pupils appreciate that the school is calm and orderly. They understand that the school's rules and routines help to create a positive environment for learning and keep everyone safe. Pupils place a high value on behaving in accordance with the school's expectations. They conduct themselves well.

Pupils learn the value of serving others. They relish opportunities to contribute to both the school and local communities. For example, older pupils run extra-curricular activities, such as chess and history clubs, for younger pupils to enjoy. Pupils take pride in helping people in their local community. For instance, pupils organise food bank collections and send Christmas cards to local care home residents.

Since the school joined the trust, it has taken effective action to improve the quality of education that it provides. There is a clear determination to ensure that pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve highly. In the majority of subjects, most do.

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

The trust has ensured that leaders at all levels have the expertise required to fulfil their roles effectively. The impact of the trust's work is evident across every aspect of the school. For example, safeguarding processes are rigorous, pupils' attendance has rapidly increased and subject curriculums are ambitious. In a very small number of subjects, some instability in staffing has slowed the school's progress towards embedding the curriculum. These issues have recently been resolved and, as a result, pupils currently in the school are learning well.

The curriculum is logically ordered. In the main, the school has carefully identified the important information that pupils should remember over time. Teachers make frequent checks on pupils' learning. Teachers appreciate that the school's strategies to check pupils' knowledge and understanding help to reduce their workload. That said, at times, some teachers do not conduct these checks as effectively as they could to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this to explain new concepts clearly and to enthuse pupils about their subjects. Pupils enjoy learning. They listen to their teachers. This helps to create purposeful classrooms where learning is rarely disrupted. In the main, teachers deliver the curriculum well. They routinely use the school's agreed learning strategies to promote effective learning. However, on occasion, some teachers' understanding of how to use these strategies successfully is less secure. At times, learning activities do not help some pupils to embed their knowledge as well as they could.

The school has greatly strengthened its provision for pupils with SEND. The needs of these pupils are swiftly and accurately identified. The school and the trust have ensured that staff have appropriate information about the needs of these pupils, as well as the expertise required to support them effectively. As a result, pupils with SEND learn well alongside their peers.

Most pupils enjoy reading. The 'Star Readers' challenge encourages them to engage with a varied and ambitious range of texts. Those pupils who struggle to read well benefit from carefully targeted support that helps to swiftly address gaps in their reading knowledge.

The school ensures that pupils are prepared well for life beyond school. Their learning about different faiths and cultures helps to ensure that they are tolerant and accepting of others. Pupils develop confidence by embracing opportunities to develop new talents and interests. For instance, they enjoy a myriad of extra-curricular activities, from breakdancing to debating. The school's careers programme ensures that pupils have the information that they need to make well-informed choices about their next steps.

The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils as future leaders. For instance, members of the student council consult with their peers and use this feedback to enact meaningful change within the school. They do this with pride.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, some teachers do not use the school's agreed learning strategies as effectively as the school intends. This means that, on occasion, some pupils do not embed their learning as securely as they could. The school should ensure that staff are supported to deliver subject curriculums as intended.
- Some teachers do not use the school's assessment strategies as effectively as they could to identify and rectify any gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge. As a result, some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge. This has an impact on their future learning. The school should support teachers to identify and address gaps in knowledge promptly so that pupils' learning builds securely over time.

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	148847
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10348382
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	1,181
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kamruddin Kothia OBE DL
CEO of the trust	Sir Mufti Hamid Patel CBE
Principal	Adrian Smale
Website	www.oulderhillacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Oulder Hill Leadership Academy converted to become an academy school in March 2022. When its predecessor school, Oulder Hill Community School and Language College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate for overall effectiveness.
- This school is part of Star Academies.
- The principal joined the school in September 2023.
- The school uses two registered and two unregistered alternative provisions for a very small number of pupils.
- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with the principal, other leaders and staff.
- An inspector met with the CEO of the trust and representatives of the local accountability board, including the chair. An inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils’ behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses shared through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted’s surveys for staff and for pupils.
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school’s policies and records relating to pupils’ behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.

Inspection team

Sally Rix, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Sanjay Patel	Ofsted Inspector
David Woolley	Ofsted Inspector
Craig Yates	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025