

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Oak Tree Academy

Newham Grange Avenue, Stockton-on-Tees TS19 0SE

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 March 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The principal of this school is Elizabeth Pollitt. This school is part of Northern Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer designate (CEO), Jane Wilson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mark Saunders. There is also an executive principal, Sara McCallum, who is responsible for this school and four others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils embrace the school's motto 'from tiny acorns mighty oaks grow'. Older pupils (mighty oaks) happily encourage and support younger children (tiny acorns). Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the school. One pupil, who reflected the views of many, said, 'everyone here spreads respect and kindness.'

The school has incredibly high expectations for pupils' behaviour. It encourages pupils to make positive choices rewarded with praise. Staff model diligently the school's behaviour expectations. Pupils behave with consistently high levels of respect for each other. Pupils praise each other, acknowledging high-quality knowledge and skills. 'Applause moments' ring out around the school as pupils celebrate success. Pupils behave exceptionally well.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. The impact of the school's work is reflected in the school's end of key stage outcomes. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve highly.

Pupils demonstrate a strong awareness of safety. The school's 'talk it out' cards provide pupils with opportunities to share their concerns with an adult. Pupils value the high-quality pastoral support on offer.

Pupils in Year 5 and 6 relish the ten challenges in the 'I Aspire' project. Pupils engage in tasks that effectively prepare them for the next stage of their educational journey.

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

The school has extensively developed its curriculum since the last inspection. The school's curriculum is ambitiously sequenced from Nursery to Year 6. Teachers have a clear understanding of the prior learning pupils need to access new learning. Pupils readily recall the vocabulary and prior learning associated with previous units. For example, pupils in Year 5 can explain the meaning of historical vocabulary, such as treaty and alliance linked to their First World War topic.

Pupils respond with accurate and detailed explanations to questions posed by their teachers. The work pupils complete across the curriculum is of an exceptionally high standard. Pupils show immense pride in their work and strive to make continuous improvements, especially to their handwriting and presentation. The school has the same high expectations for pupils with SEND as it has for their peers. They access the same curriculum as their peers. The school swiftly identifies any barriers to their learning. It provides appropriate support to ensure that pupils with SEND are highly successful.

The school checks what pupils know and remember during and at the end a unit of work. At the end of a topic, pupils recall the knowledge they have learned. Pupils are keen to complete these review tasks as it enables them to recap, connect and share their learning.

The school uses a phonics programme that starts in Nursery. Staff provide appropriate activities for children to build listening and attention skills. Nursery children learn repetitive songs with a distinctive beat to build their knowledge of sounds and words. Staff model language effectively. The school has a clear programme to teach vocabulary in the early years. The school selects three words a week for children to practise. Staff purposefully provide opportunities for children to use these focus words in their play. Through this repetition, children systematically build a secure bank of crucial words and phrases.

Pupils across the school read well. They are fluent and use their phonic knowledge to read new and unfamiliar words. Pupils are resilient as readers and are willing to keep trying, even when they find the process challenging. The school checks pupils' phonics knowledge. Staff put catch-up sessions in place for a small number of pupils in key stage 2 who need further support. Such support helps pupils to develop effective reading and writing skills.

Children in the early years enjoy a calm space with high-quality resources that engage them in purposeful play. The activity choices are well considered to ensure that they are appropriate for both Nursery and Reception children. For example, the creative painting area is used well. Here, Nursery children use a peg with a large pompom to paint while Reception children manipulate a small cotton bud. This supports their fine motor

development. Such activities ensure that children can access the same experience with appropriate challenge.

There is a whole school approach to teaching about healthy relationships. Pupils know that healthy relationships are grounded in kindness, loyalty and respect. Pupils have chances to debate in a considered way. They listen to the views and opinions of others. The school has links in the community with the church, the garden centre and the local residential home. Pupils visit these special places throughout the year. These activities build social connections. Pupils enjoy attending after school clubs. Pupils learn about budgeting and finance through the school's enterprise initiative. These experiences enhance pupils' personal development.

The school has taken decisive action to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of the pupils. There is a shared vision for excellence. The local academy council completes visits to support and challenge the school. The trust has a clear oversight of the quality of education and care that the school offers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in September 2019.

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	139959
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10346506
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Sanders
CEO of the trust	Jane Wilson (CEO designate)
Principal	Elizabeth Pollitt
Website	www.ota.northerneducationtrust.org
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Northern Education Trust.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the principal and other leaders in the school.
- The inspector met with members of the local academy council, the CEO designate of the trust and a representative of the trustees.

- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. The inspector spoke with groups of staff and pupils to gain their views about the school.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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