

Oasis Academy Arena

Albert Road, South Norwood, London SE25 4QL

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The quality of education provided for pupils at Oasis Academy Arena is unacceptable.
- The curriculum is inadequate. Subject teaching in key stage 3 is poorly planned. It does not give pupils the skills and knowledge they need for further study.
- Teachers' expectations are not high enough. In too many instances, work is not demanding or poor work is not challenged.
- Provision in science is inadequate. Pupils have very few opportunities to undertake experiments.
- Provision in technology, humanities and the arts subjects is weak. Limited time is given to music and art, and this time is not well used.
- Experts have been brought in from the trust to improve the quality of teaching, but this work is not planned or evaluated in enough detail.
- Pupils' reading and writing skills are underdeveloped. Reading for pleasure is not promoted strongly; the school library is poorly stocked and is not operational.
- Insufficient support is provided for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The most able pupils and those who are disadvantaged do not make good progress.
- The system for testing, assessing and recording pupils' progress is inaccurate. It has enabled leaders to identify that all groups of pupils are underachieving but does not show the extent of their low attainment.
- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement. A small minority behave inappropriately. In lessons where teaching is poor, low-level disruption sometimes occurs.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is limited by inadequacies in the curriculum, and by the poor behaviour of a small minority.

The school has the following strengths

- Current leaders, including those responsible for governance, have brought about clear improvements in safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Current leaders have the confidence of most staff, parents and carers.
- Safeguarding is effective. Personal, social and health (PSHE) education is well led.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - carrying out an exhaustive revision of curriculum plans across the school in every subject
 - ensuring that key stage 3 pupils are given increased and more demanding curriculum experiences across the arts and technology subjects
 - drawing up a detailed and coherent plan for improving teaching and the curriculum in science
 - ensuring that all support from within the trust, including from lead practitioners, is properly planned and evaluated.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - promoting and achieving the highest expectations for the quality of learning and the quality of written work produced by pupils, in every subject and at every opportunity
 - ensuring that the requirements of every pupil who has SEN and/or disabilities are assessed in detail, and that all teachers and teaching assistants employ effective strategies to support these pupils
 - reviewing the systems for measuring pupils' progress so that they provide accurate assessment information and therefore support good teaching. This should be done in consultation with expert subject practitioners across the trust and in tandem with the revised curriculum plans.
- Devise and implement a strategy for improving pupils' reading across the school, to include: an expectation that all pupils read high-quality texts regularly and often; a programme of training for all teachers and for reading intervention tutors; and a plan for the effective use of the school library across the curriculum.
- Ensure that behaviour is consistently good across the school, and that leaders hold staff to account for the quality of their teaching and its impact on pupils' behaviour in lessons.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The curriculum is inadequate. The range of subjects in key stage 3 is broad, but the time allocated to individual subjects is not balanced. The quality of curriculum planning is poor. Consequently, subject teaching does not provide pupils with the skills and knowledge they need in order to make adequate progress.
- Current leaders have decided to change from a three-year to a two-year key stage 3. Subject leaders have not adapted curriculum plans to reflect these new arrangements.
- Science suffers from a lack of subject leadership. Pupils rarely undertake experiments, and teaching is weak. A recovery plan for science exists and the trust's lead practitioner has been engaged to support this until the new head of science arrives in April 2018. However, these strategies are not joined up. Targets and milestones for improvement are unclear.
- The trust also provides support for teaching in history and geography. Evidence seen by inspectors indicates that modelling from the lead practitioners is of high quality. Again, however, strategic planning and monitoring of this work lack detail.
- Computing is only a recent introduction as a discrete curriculum subject. The design curriculum is restricted to food technology. Arts subjects are taught in termly rotation, which reduces time for teaching and learning. This is exacerbated by the poor quality of curriculum content, particularly in art and music. Too much of the limited time for these subjects is wasted. Work seen during the inspection lacked rigour and included trivial activities, such as word-searches in art and colouring-in in music.
- Pupils told inspectors that the rotation arrangements for arts subjects make it difficult to remember what they have learned from one term to the next. Pupils in Year 9 reported dissatisfaction with the range of GCSE subjects offered to them. They also said that they would like to take part in more trips and extra-curricular activities, such as drama.
- Despite strengths in the PSHE education programme, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is limited. It is undermined by weaknesses in the curriculum, including in the arts subjects, and by the poor behaviour shown by a small minority.
- Led by an assistant principal, an ambitious careers policy and programme have been introduced. This includes visiting speakers, 'drop-down days' when the timetable is suspended and pupils focus on employment issues, and links with universities for the most able. The programme is well thought out. However, as one Year 9 pupil said, limitations in the curriculum undermine this ambition because pupils may not have access to the skills they need 'to follow their dreams'.
- A system for managing the performance of individual teachers is in place. Classroom observation is systematic and well documented. Support and challenge programmes have been set up where teaching is weakest. However, weak teaching is more widespread than leaders' observations suggest.
- Previous leaders' plans and evaluation of pupil premium funding for the 2016/2017 academic year are scant. Plans made by current leaders for this year's funding are more

detailed. However, these plans are not targeted precisely enough towards those for whom the funding is intended. This does not help these disadvantaged pupils make the accelerated progress they need in order to catch up with their peers.

- The extended learning provision (ELP) is effective and led well. Good work is done in developing pupils' confidence and by integrating them into the main school. However, leadership of provision in the main school for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is ineffective. Initial assessments of pupils' needs are incomplete; insufficient support is provided for these pupils' learning in class.
- Permanent staff have been recruited, and very few supply staff are now used. Good practice from within the trust is being drawn on. Current senior leaders have brought much-needed consistency for parents, staff and pupils. However, this does not excuse serious weaknesses in the quality of education provided for pupils. The work of pupils in Year 9 shows that these weaknesses have been apparent since the school opened.
- Since their appointments, some improvements have been made by the regional director, executive principal and principal. Crucially, these include improvements to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. Having acted swiftly to stabilise pupils' personal development, welfare and behaviour, the priorities for leaders now are the curriculum and the quality of teaching. Both require urgent, rapid improvement.

Governance of the school

- The multi-academy trust's regional director provides professional governance to the school. She is responsible, on behalf of the trust board and supported by the local academy council, for fulfilling all of the trust's statutory governance functions. These include financial oversight and performance management of the principal. Discussions with inspectors showed that she is realistic about the school's performance and has a grip on the situation.
- As soon as she took up appointment in April 2017, the regional director identified serious faults with the school's performance and management. She brought in the executive principal, who is an experienced headteacher from within the trust with excellent knowledge of the school's locality and its community.
- The regional director and executive principal have deployed expert practitioners from the trust to support weak teaching and leadership in English, science and humanities. The regional lead principal is also working closely with the school. The trust has committed to increasing use of this expertise in order to improve the quality of pupils' education at Oasis Academy Arena. However, planning for the strategic use of this support lacks detail. Unclear targets and timescales mean that the support cannot be evaluated sharply or those involved held closely to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All systems and processes for safeguarding are in order, including personnel checks made on staff. Face-to-face staff training on safeguarding matters is regular and covers

all areas, including extremism, female genital mutilation and exploitation. This is complemented by regular online training.

- Staff spoken to by inspectors showed sound knowledge of the signs of possible safeguarding concerns. Similarly, pupils spoken to know when to turn to an adult and which one, should they require help.
- Record-keeping is thorough and referrals to external agencies are made in a timely fashion. The executive principal and the designated safeguarding lead demonstrate an organised approach and a detailed knowledge of individual pupils.
- During the inspection, inspectors were made aware of concerns about the security of pupils' lavatories. These concerns were brought to leaders' immediate attention and were quickly resolved.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do, know and achieve are too low. Work in pupils' books reflects these low expectations.
- The quality of teachers' assessment to raise standards is ineffective. A system of 'pre-testing' and 'post-testing' is used for every unit of work, in every subject. In practice, where there is poor teaching and a weak curriculum, this perpetuates low standards. Pupils demonstrate low starting points in the 'pre-tests' because of their weak learning in previous units. The 'post-tests' may show relative progress from these low starting points, but standards are still below expectation, and this leads to the next starting points being weak as well. In some cases seen by inspectors, the skills and knowledge tested were trivial or low-level.
- Pupils' writing skills are underdeveloped. In English, an increased emphasis has been placed on developing extended writing skills. Inspectors saw some evidence in pupils' books of improvements in writing. However, across the curriculum, writing is not good enough. Some pupils were proud to show off their improved handwriting, and other pupils had taken great care of their books. However, these were the exception rather than the rule. In too many instances, pupils do not take care with handwriting and presentation. Inspectors saw far too many dilapidated workbooks.
- Reading is not promoted effectively. Teaching does not systematically encourage pupils to read for pleasure. Intervention for pupils requiring help with reading is at an early stage; staff charged with leading this work do not have the knowledge or training to make a difference. Nearly three years after the school opened, the school library is still not operational. Sets of new fiction books have been purchased but many are of low quality or more suited to primary school pupils. Non-fiction books have been acquired through donation, rather than through a strategic plan to enhance curriculum learning.
- Insufficient help is provided to support pupils who speak English as an additional language, those who have specific learning needs such as dyslexia, those who are disadvantaged, or those who are most able. In many classes visited, these pupils were given the same work and resources, regardless of their needs or abilities.
- Isolated examples of dynamic, ambitious teaching were observed by inspectors, including in mathematics. A 'mathematics mastery' programme is starting to raise

expectations and standards. Again, however, this high-quality teaching is an exception rather than a rule.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Outside lessons, most pupils are confident. They interact positively with each other and with adults. In lessons, however, some are reluctant to engage. Poor teaching does not develop their confidence as learners.
- Some of the best senior leadership comes from the assistant principal responsible for PSHE education. She is also the designated safeguarding lead. Since her appointment, she has brought significant improvements to the school's personal development programme. Good use is made of guest speakers to inform pupils about personal and welfare issues. Although some strong PSHE teaching was seen by inspectors, in other cases teachers did not have the skills to facilitate pupils' thinking through debate and discussion.
- Staff, pupils and most parents believe that staff deal with any cases of bullying effectively. Pupils understand the signs of bullying. They said that cases of racist and homophobic behaviour are rare, and speak positively about teachers' support for their personal well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Leaders set clear expectations for good behaviour. The majority of pupils show respect for staff and for each other. In a minority of lessons, low-level disruption occurs as the result of poor-quality teaching. This is not the case in every lesson that is poorly taught; in some lessons observed, pupils showed patience despite the poor deal they were receiving. However, in every instance of inappropriate classroom behaviour seen, expectations of learning were low or the activities mundane. In contrast, pupils showed good attitudes in lessons where work was interesting and challenging.
- Pupils are lively. The majority behave sensibly as they move around the school. The one-way system around the building, although not popular with everyone, is working. A few pupils are over-boisterous or jostle and need reminding about how to behave. This usually has the desired effect and pupils show little defiance when challenged.
- Although they indicated that the behaviour of some pupils is still not good enough, a number of parents and pupils said that it is better under the current leadership. The significant reduction in exclusions for poor behaviour over the past year supports this view.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. This has improved in the past year, as a result of work undertaken by current leaders. Persistent absence remains

above average. However, this figure is skewed somewhat by a small number of pupils who are permanently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Teachers and subject leaders provide results from the regular tests that pupils take at the start and end of a project, in every subject. The intention is to show pupils' progress in the project and in relation to their overall targets. However, the information provided about pupils' progress is inaccurate. It suggests that they are doing much better than the work in their books shows they are. Furthermore, targets set for every subject across a year group are exactly the same, and different targets are set for different year groups. For example, the current Year 9 has much higher targets than Year 8. This is despite Year 8 being the more able cohort and Year 9 pupils having had a particularly poor deal since they joined the school.
- Long-term inadequacies in the curriculum and in teaching mean that pupils have not built up the knowledge expected for their ages. This is particularly the case in science. It is also the case in the humanities, computing and the arts subjects.
- All groups of pupils are underachieving, including those who are disadvantaged, those who have SEN and/or disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language and the most able. The school's information suggests that boys are making much less progress than girls, and this is confirmed by work seen during the inspection.
- Work seen in books and other inspection evidence show that many pupils' proficiency in reading and writing is weak. This means that these pupils are ill prepared for the next stage of their education.

School details

Unique reference number	140209
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10045335

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	357
Appropriate authority	Oasis Community Learning Trust Board
Trust's Regional Director	Kirstie Fulthorpe
Executive Principal	Di Morgan
Principal	Thomas Raymond
Telephone number	0208 240 6700
Website	www.oasisacademyarena.org
Email address	info@oasisarena.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Oasis Academy Arena, a member of the Oasis Community Learning Trust, opened in September 2015 with a single cohort of Year 7 pupils. It is now in its third year of operation with cohorts in Years 7, 8 and 9. All year groups are undersubscribed.
- The trust's regional director took up her post in April 2017. She immediately brought in an executive principal and, together, they appointed a team of new deputy and assistant principals to strengthen senior leadership. A new principal was appointed and took up post in January 2018.
- The school includes an enhanced learning provision (ELP) for a small number of pupils who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. Currently, six pupils attend the ELP. The school does not currently make use of any other alternative providers.
- A number of national lead practitioners and the regional lead principal from within the trust are supporting the school. Governance is provided through the trust by the regional director and supported by the local academy council.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out observations in every curriculum subject and of almost every teacher in the school. These included short visits to classrooms, scrutiny of pupils' books and other work, and extended observations in lessons. Inspectors met with the principal, the executive principal, the regional director and the regional lead principal. They held discussions with groups of teachers, the deputy and assistant principals, and subject leaders. Three formal panels and other discussions during the school day provided inspectors with pupils' views of the school.
- Ninety parents registered their views about the school on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Eight of these added specific comments, which inspectors took into account. A total of 23 staff members responded to the online staff survey.

Inspection team

Mark Phillips, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Madeleine Gerard	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Ofsted Inspector

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