

Inspection of EOTAS Swindon

Ferndale Road, Ferndale, Swindon SN2 1HL

Inspection dates:	10 and 11 December 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils join EOTAS Swindon for a variety of reasons. They may need to study at the school for a few weeks or for a few years. The school provides a safe and nurturing environment for pupils unable to access mainstream education. Pupils build positive relationships with staff. Pupils are equipped for successful next steps.

The school has devised an ambitious curriculum for pupils to study. Careful checks are made to find out what pupils already know and can do. Many pupils have special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND) and receive appropriate additional support. In most subjects, the school ensures that pupils make strong progress through the curriculum. In these subjects, pupils are well supported and go on to achieve qualifications. However, there is work to do to ensure all subjects are taught as well.

The school provides highly individualised support for pupils' personal development. Over time, pupils show a growing confidence in themselves. They learn to regulate their emotions. They learn to face challenges and develop resilience within a safe and supportive environment. Pupils successfully learn how to speak out to make a difference for themselves and others. For example, as 'action champions', pupils help to inform positive changes within the school.

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

The school has a deep understanding of its pupils. It uses its knowledge of pupils' strengths and barriers to identify and meet pupils' SEND needs extremely well. Many pupils are disadvantaged and have an education health and care (EHC) plan. The personal development programme, including pastoral support, is exceptional. This provision helps pupils understand the consequences of their actions and the importance of speaking out when in need of help.

Positive working relationships exist between staff and pupils. These are built on trust, respect and kindness. There are clear routines and expectations for pupils' behaviour. Incidents of bullying are dealt with appropriately, including work with external agencies. School is a safe place. When needed, pupils complete 'twilight' sessions. They are helped to reflect on how their behaviour and attitudes could be improved the following day. This allows pupils to make a fresh start each day. Pupils appreciate this care and support and most attend school regularly.

Since the previous inspection, the school has successfully worked with pupils and their families to improve attendance. Many parents and carers value this support. Increased attendance in school has contributed to pupils' positive attitudes to school life and improved self-confidence. This work prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education or employment.

There is a broad and balanced curriculum in place that has identified the essential knowledge pupils should know. It aims to help pupils stay safe, healthy and prepared for the responsibilities of life and adulthood. While each college addresses different needs,

the curriculum is coherent, well sequenced and age appropriate. This includes the curriculum taught online to pupils unable to attend face-to-face lessons.

The school prepares pupils well for possible careers. Staff are aspirational for pupils. They raise pupils' aspirations for future life and careers. Pupils speak highly of the impartial careers advice they receive.

The school ensures that any gaps in pupils' reading knowledge are identified and addressed promptly. Through books, media, audiobooks, newspapers and discussions, staff help pupils to see the importance of reading. The school works well to build pupils' confidence, enjoyment and knowledge of reading.

Staff use 'pupil passports' to effectively target specific skills and knowledge. Alongside the curriculum, this document enables staff to accurately spot pupils' missing prior knowledge and to plan lessons that revisit important curriculum content. The learning is presented clearly and helps to ensure pupils embed the key concepts as they go. Consequently, where this is effective, pupils can explain what they have learned using correct subject-specific language. However, when staff knowledge of the curriculum is not secure, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not closed sufficiently well. Pupils are unable to secure new knowledge and make connections between important curriculum concepts.

The school is relentless in its drive to improve the quality of education and provision. It works with a wide range of professionals to minimise problems their pupils may face. For example, the school works with the police to help pupils avoid criminal exploitation in their local community. A newly formed management committee that includes members from the previous interim executive board has recently taken on the responsibility of school governance. It intends to hold the school to account for its decisions and actions while maintaining a watchful eye on staff well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not implemented as intended in some subjects. In these subjects, learning activities do not help to secure and deepen pupils' knowledge of important concepts sufficiently well. This means that some pupils are unable to build on their prior learning and make connections between concepts taught. The school should make sure that it supports staff to deliver the curriculum effectively so that pupils learn and remember more of the school's curriculum.

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 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	126171
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10344552
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Holroyd
Headteacher	Juliette Baldwin
Website	www.eotas.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 September 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils who have been permanently excluded from a mainstream school or are at risk of being permanently excluded. It also provides education for pupils with complex medical and/or mental health needs.
- The school is organised over three sites: Fernbrook College, Riverside College, including medical provision, and Oakfield College. Each site provides individual packages of provision, ranging from short-term placements to long-term medical care.
- An interim executive board responsible for governance during the previous inspection has recently been replaced by a management committee.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative provisions.
- Places at EOTAS are commissioned through the local authority and pupils' home schools.
- 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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, heads of college and other staff.
- An inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector spoke with a representatives of Swindon local authority.
- An inspector listened to pupils in Years 8 and 9 read to a known adult.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils' work and EHC plans and associated documents.
- Inspectors observed pupils during social times and spoke with pupils and leaders about opportunities for pupils' personal development.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the survey for staff.

Inspection team

Marie Thomas, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sean McKeown	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Vaughan	Ofsted Inspector
Sandy Hayes	Ofsted Inspector

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