

Almondbury Community School

Fernside Avenue, Almondbury, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD5 8PQ

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- In Key Stages 3 and 4, over time, pupils do not make consistently good progress from their starting points, particularly in mathematics. Standards of attainment by the end of Year 11 fell in 2014 and the school did not meet the government's minimum standards.
- The quality of teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 over time has not enabled pupils to make good progress. It requires improvement, particularly in mathematics in Key Stage 4. Many changes in teaching staffing have affected the quality of teaching over time.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, including the quality of work produced are sometimes too low. Work is not always pitched at the correct level to challenge or to excite pupils in their learning, particularly the most able.
- The quality of marking is variable. Not all pupils are clear what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are not consistently good, particularly older pupils. They do not always take pride in their work. Poor quality work is sometimes accepted too readily.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe requires improvement. Although pupils are kept safe, there is not yet a whole-school policy for this aspect. This limits leaders' ability to effectively check and review the impact of their work in this area.
- Due to the additional challenges faced during the transition to an all-through school, leaders have not focused sharply enough on the quality of teaching and how well pupils are learning. They are yet to ensure that teachers are challenged effectively to improve their teaching practices or hold them fully to account for pupils' progress.
- Good teaching practices that do exist are not shared widely.
- Not all leaders are fully clear of the progress pupils are making in order to ensure that extra support that is required is quickly put in place.
- Over time, governors have not held leaders robustly to account for the school's performance. They are yet to ensure that leaders make effective use of the pupil premium so that disadvantaged pupils do well.

The school has the following strengths

- Provision in the early years is good. Children make good progress from their starting points.
- Teaching is good in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In all key stages, due to effective care and support, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well.
- Attendance is high. Pupils are keen to attend school and are punctual. Exclusions are rare.
- The new headteacher has gained the full support of staff, pupils, parents and the local community. Together with local authority support, improvements in leadership, governance, teaching and pupils' achievement are being made. The ability of the school to improve is gathering pace.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons and parts of lessons in all key stages, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Inspectors held formal discussions with four groups of pupils, two representatives from the local authority, governors, senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors held informal discussions with pupils at break time, in lessons and around the school to gather their views about behaviour and learning.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including minutes of governing body meetings, performance management information, data of pupils' progress and external reports. Documents relating to safeguarding, child protection, behaviour and attendance were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took into account the 38 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and met with representatives from a parent forum group, which is independent of the school.
- A letter from the parent forum, an email from the Chair of the Governing Body and 39 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire were also considered.
- The inspection team was unable to review nationally published data about pupils' progress and standards in the early years or in Key Stages 1 and 2 as these pupils are new to the school and this information is not yet available. However, inspectors reviewed school data of pupils' achievement, work in pupils' books and observed their learning in lessons in these key stages.
- Inspectors carried out a formal scrutiny of pupils' work in English and science. A joint scrutiny of work in mathematics in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 was undertaken with the headteacher.
- Inspectors considered the new nature of the all-through school, and how it is adapting following the recent integration of pupils and a full re-structure of staffing.

Inspection team

Colin Scott, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Batty	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school was formerly known as Almondbury High School and Language College providing secondary education for pupils aged 11 to 16. In June 2014, it became an all-through school for pupils aged 3 to 16 and is now known as Almondbury Community School.
- In the secondary phase, the school is much smaller than the average-sized school. In the primary phase, it is of a similar size to other primary schools.
- Children in the early years attend the Nursery on a part-time basis. Children in Reception attend full time.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. An above-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion that speaks English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils support through the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics, by the end of Year 11.
- The school does not enter pupils early for GCSE examinations.
- The new headteacher has been in post since January 2015.
- There has been significant change and re-structuring of staffing since the previous inspection.
- The governing body from the former Almondbury High School has been reconstituted and now includes some governors from the former primary schools.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 are still taught in the premises of their former school. The school is currently undergoing refurbishment in order to accommodate them.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good in order that pupils make at least good progress, particularly in mathematics in Key Stage 4, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving, including the quality of work that pupils produce, and that work of a low standard is not readily accepted
 - teachers always set tasks which challenge pupils of varying abilities, particularly the most able, so that pupils are more excited about, and engaged in their learning and their behaviour and attitudes to learning improve
 - a whole-school policy for marking pupils' work is established and that all teachers adhere to it so that pupils are clear what they need to do to improve
 - pupils are given more opportunities to develop their mathematical skills and understanding by applying their skills to solving real-life problems, including across different subjects
 - the best teaching practices that exist are widely shared among staff.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, in order to speed up the rate of improvement even further by ensuring that:
 - leaders, including subject leaders, are clearly focused on checking the quality of teaching and that teachers are challenged effectively to improve their teaching practices and are held fully to account for pupils' progress
 - leaders at all levels develop their skills so that they are clear about the progress pupils are making across the key stages and subjects and can provide swift additional support for pupils' learning, if required
 - the single all-through nature of the school is reflected in a shared vision and ethos
 - whole-school policies are established including for marking pupils' work, managing pupils' behaviour and for keeping pupils safe so that practices are consistent across the school
 - further developing the skills of governors so that they effectively hold the school to account for its performance, including ensuring that the pupil premium funding enables disadvantaged pupils to

achieve well, particularly in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management have not ensured that the quality of teaching over time in Key Stages 3 and 4 is consistently good and, as a result, pupils do not make consistently good progress between Years 7 and 11, particularly in mathematics. In 2014, attainment in Year 11 fell and the school did not meet the government's minimum standard. Leaders are yet to ensure that pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently good.
- The move to becoming an all-through school has presented leaders and governors with a significant number of additional challenges to overcome. A major restructuring of the school's staffing, for example, has resulted in much instability in teaching, especially in mathematics. The need to manage the school's transition has meant that, until recently, leaders have not been able to focus as well as they might on how well pupils are learning.
- A new leadership structure is now in place and leadership is starting to strengthen. The new headteacher has successfully enlisted the support of staff, pupils and parents. They express confidence in his ability to improve the school.
- Senior, phase and subject leaders are still at the very early stages of adapting to working as a single school. They know that they are yet to ensure that the all-through nature of the school is reflected in a fully shared vision and ethos. Some whole-school policies, such as for marking pupils' work, managing pupils' behaviour and for keeping pupils safe are yet to be established. As a result, practices are inconsistent across the school.
- The leadership of teaching requires improvement. Over time, leaders, including subject leaders, have not challenged teachers effectively to improve their teaching practice. The best teaching practices that exist are not widely shared among staff. Not all leaders have the skills that they require to reach an accurate view of the quality of teaching and they do not yet hold teachers fully to account for pupils' progress. Nevertheless, leaders know what improvements are needed and where, such as improving teaching for older pupils and achievement in mathematics.
- Arrangements to manage the performance of teachers have followed the correct processes. Staff only receive pay awards if they meet the targets that they are set. However, in the past, this has not always taken account of pupils' progress or the quality of teaching over time. This is now changing. Leaders and governors are now checking more carefully that staff are only rewarded when pupils do well and are taught effectively.
- The school's use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is being used increasingly well. Leaders have successfully used some pupil premium funding to impact positively on narrowing the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others in English. The gaps in attainment in mathematics between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are also now starting to close. However, leaders are yet to ensure that they attain as well as other pupils nationally.
- The curriculum successfully meets the needs of younger pupils. By the end of Year 6, pupils' good achievement means that they enter the secondary phase of education with improved standards of attainment. Given the smaller than average size of the secondary phase, the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 adequately meets current pupils' needs. Pupils enjoy the choices they have in the courses they study. They say their aspirations for future careers are well supported. Year 10 students commented that they receive excellent advice and guidance about suitable sixth form and university choices so that they can make good choices about their next steps.
- Leaders know that, over time, pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 have not achieved well enough in mathematics. They are already taking steps to remedy this. Pupils are starting to do better, particularly in Key Stage 3, due to better teaching. Even so, opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical understanding by applying their skills to solving real-life problems are still overlooked, including when completing work in other curriculum subjects.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of care, good relationships and mutual respect between pupils and staff. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted well, as is pupils' understanding of British values. Pupils look in-depth at the historical British involvement in the slave trade and how modern society and thinking has developed as a result of this past. Pupils say that staff are quick to ensure that any discrimination or misunderstanding of beliefs or faiths are challenged.
- The primary school sports and physical education funding is used effectively to increase pupils' participation in sports. Sports day, which took place during the inspection, was thoroughly enjoyed by pupils, well supported by parents and involved teaching staff working together to promote more interest in

a wide range of sporting activities.

- The school receives appropriate challenge and support from the local authority. The new headteacher particularly appreciates the support he receives, such as in developing his skills in evaluating the school's performance.
- The school has fostered good partnerships with parents and the local community. Initially, there was some local concern about the plans to extend the school's provision to include the primary phase. Because of this, an independent 'parent forum group' was established by a number of concerned parents. As a result of the close links established between this group and school leaders and the local authority, the group have been effectively involved in the transition and in decision-making, including in the appointment of the headteacher. Parental views are now very positive. Most would recommend the school to others.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and are effective in doing so. Nevertheless, leaders have yet to bring several separate policies into a single whole-school policy.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Over time, governors have not held the school effectively to account for making sure that the quality of teaching is good and that pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 achieve well and show good attitudes to learning.
 - Throughout the period of transition to an all-through school, governors have prioritised their work in supporting school leaders with resolving many complex staff-related issues. They have offered strong support in this respect, as seen in the well-kept and detailed governing body meeting minutes.
 - There have been recent several changes in membership of the governing body. The new acting Chair of the Governing Body leads the governing body strongly. Some governors have joined from the former primary schools. They are passionate about the school and have high aspirations for its pupils.
 - Following a review of the work of the governing body, their effectiveness is starting to improve. Governors are receiving good support from the new headteacher and the local authority to develop their skills. They are starting to have a much better understanding of the school's performance, including data that shows how well it performs in comparison to others, and of the priorities for improvement. However, they are yet to hold the school fully to account and their skills in doing so are still developing.
 - Governors review the school's use of the pupil premium funding. They are aware of how it is spent and check that it is targeted at those pupils for whom it is intended. However, governors are yet to ensure that the impact of the pupil premium is fully effective in closing gaps in attainment between its pupils and others, particularly other pupils nationally in mathematics.
 - Governors understand how teachers' performance links to pay. They ensure that weak teaching is addressed but have not used the system well enough to ensure teaching is consistently good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to their work and learning are not consistently good, particularly from the older pupils. Their books sometime show a lack of pride and respect, reflecting in messy presentation and some poor quality writing.
- As a result of the variable quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour in lessons is also variable. Most behave well and lessons are rarely disrupted; however, when activities do not meet pupils' varying needs and abilities, especially when they lack challenge, some pupils can become bored, disengaged, and easily distracted. A whole-school policy for managing pupil behaviour has not yet been established.
- Pupils move extremely sensibly and courteously around the school. They are happy, content and pleasant to each other and to staff. Pupils are well dressed.
- Pupils are keen to attend school, do so regularly and are punctual. They have positive aspirations for themselves and their future. Their understanding and empathy for different faiths and cultures, backgrounds, lifestyles and beliefs is good.
- Pupils told inspectors that their opinions about the school and how it can be improved are highly valued. The school council, for example, asked for space outdoors to eat lunch with their friends. This has now been provided.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.

- Following the recent extension of the primary phase to the school, leaders are yet to establish a single whole-school policy for keeping pupils of all ages safe and secure. At present, different policies exist in different key stages. While inspection evidence confirms that pupils are adequately kept safe and that all statutory requirements are met, leaders' ability to effectively check and review the impact of procedures across the whole school are not as efficient as they could be.
- Pupils say that they are safe and that they feel safe. The vast majority of parents and staff agree that children are safe across all areas of the school. In practical lessons, they are given clear guidance to support their safe use of equipment and they receive repeated reminders about how to stay safe when using online technologies.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and should it occur they are confident that staff will deal with it quickly. They say they are happy to report to staff any instances where they feel they are bullied.
- Leaders successfully promote good attendance. They follow up any absences swiftly and rigorously. Attendance is high compared to the national averages. Few pupils are regularly absent and rates of exclusion are very low.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because over time it has not enabled pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 to make good progress, notably in mathematics. As a result, too few achieve five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, at the end of Year 11.
- There have been significant changes in teaching staff resulting from a major restructuring and rebuilding of departments during the school's transition to an all-through school. Reliance on temporary or short-term staff, some of whom are not specialists in the subject they have taught, has affected pupils' achievement, particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4 in mathematics. Although staffing is now more stable, this is yet to result in consistently good achievement for pupils.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve, and of the quality of work that they produce, are not high enough to enable them to make good progress. Teachers sometimes accept work that is of a low standard too readily. Not all pupils take pride in their work and achievements.
- Work is not always matched well to pupils' varying needs and abilities. Inspection evidence from observing lessons and reviewing work in pupils' books shows that the work they complete sometimes lacks challenge. In particular, the learning of the most able pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4, and occasionally in Key Stage 2, is not consistently stretched and, as a result, they do not reach the standards of which they are capable. The lack of challenge in the work provided means that learning does not always excite pupils.
- The quality of marking is variable. There are examples of effective marking such as in English and history in Key Stages 3 and 4 where pupils are regularly and clearly informed about how to improve, are given opportunities to reflect on how well they are getting on and are challenged to do their best. However, in other subjects, marking is not regular enough to give teachers a clear and accurate view of how well pupils are learning and to influence plans for future learning. Pupils are also unclear of how well they are getting on and what they need to do to improve. Leaders are yet to agree a whole-school policy for marking of pupils' work and, as a result, variability in marking quality continues.
- The teaching of reading and writing is good in Key Stages 1 and 2 and is improving in Key Stages 3 and 4. In lessons, pupils are reminded regularly about the importance of using correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Older pupils are now receiving more opportunities to develop their reading skills and are increasingly challenged to use subject specific technical vocabulary with accuracy.
- The teaching of mathematics over time has not enabled pupils to make consistently good progress through Key Stages 3 and 4. Although teaching is now improving, particularly in Key Stage 3, it still requires further improvement. Teachers do not always give pupils enough opportunity to show their mathematical understanding by applying their skills to solving real-life problems, including across the various curriculum subjects.
- Pupils say that they receive appropriate homework but that practice varies between teachers. They say that when it is given it supports their work in the classroom well.
- Across the school, teachers care for their pupils well. There is a strong culture of mutual respect resulting in a generally positive atmosphere for learning.
- Some teaching is good. Children in the early years and pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are taught well. In these parts of the school, teaching inspires, enthuses and excites them to do their best. Work challenges them to think deeply about their learning.
- Overall, teaching assistants provide effective support. This reflects particularly in the good progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Although learning in the early years gets off to a good start and pupils achieve well in Key Stages 1 and 2, between Years 7 and 11 pupils do not make consistently good progress, particularly in mathematics. Standards of attainment by the end of Year 11 are lower than average. As a result, pupils' achievement requires improvement.
- In 2014, results of GCSE examinations in Year 11 fell below the government's minimum expectations. The proportion of pupils attaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including in English and mathematics, was much lower than average. In English, this represented expected progress from their previous starting points at the start of Key Stage 3 for the majority of pupils. However, too few pupils made good progress. School data and inspection evidence shows that progress in English in both Key Stages 3 and 4 is now improving at a good rate.
- In mathematics, a much lower than average proportion of pupils made expected progress in Year 11 in 2014. Significant changes and restructuring in mathematics staffing, including temporary teaching arrangements, affected their achievement over time. School data and inspection evidence shows that the quality of teaching in mathematics has now stabilised and improved and more pupils are making the progress expected of them in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 3. However, achievement in mathematics still requires further improvement.
- Inspection evidence shows that most groups of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 achieve well overall. From starting points that are typically below average, pupils attain standards in reading, mathematics and grammar, spelling and punctuation that are close to the national average by the end of Year 6. However, standards in writing are lower. Leaders identified raising standards in writing for younger pupils as a priority for improvement and there are already signs of improvement.
- In reading, pupils' achievement is improving across the school. Younger pupils make good progress in reading. In the current Year 1, for example, the proportion working at the expected levels in making links between letters and their sounds is broadly average and represents good progress from their lower starting points. Pupils are confident and enthusiastic in their attempt to read unfamiliar words. In Key Stages 3 and 4, achievement is now starting to improve due to better teaching. Many pupils are making good progress.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 requires improvement. In Year 11 in 2014, in mathematics, disadvantaged pupils' attainment was, on average, two full GCSE grades behind other pupils nationally and one grade behind others in the school. This gap in attainment widened from the previous year. In English disadvantaged pupils' attainment was just over half a GCSE grade behind other pupils nationally and about a third of a grade behind others in the school. This gap was narrower than the previous year and progress for current pupils is faster than seen previously. School data and inspection evidence indicates that disadvantaged pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are making similar progress to others in these key stages. There is no published data available for Key Stages 1 and 2.
- The achievement of the most able pupils is variable between key stages and subjects and overall requires improvement. Some of the most able do not make consistently good progress because work sometimes lacks the challenge needed to enable them to reach their potential. Too few pupils reached the higher grades in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2014, including in mathematics, English and modern foreign languages. In English however, expectations of what pupils can achieve are now higher and, as a result, the most able pupils are making better progress.
- In all key stages, disabled pupils and those with special educational need make good progress as a result of effective teaching and support that meets their needs.

The early years provision is good

- When children join in the Nursery and Reception, their skills, knowledge and understanding are often much lower than those typically seen. All groups of children make good progress and catch up quickly from their low starting points. School data and inspection evidence shows that, currently in Reception, the proportion of children already working at a good level of development is similar to the 2014 national average. Children are therefore increasingly well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Children's good progress is due to the good quality of teaching and the effective support provided. Staff regularly and accurately assess what children already know and can do. They use this information well to adjust teaching and activities to meet children's varying needs and abilities and to ensure additional support is directed where it is in most need.
- Adults make sure that the activities available reflect the particular interests of children and are enjoyable

so that learning is fun. In both the inside and outdoor learning areas, staff provide a balance of activities between those which are led by adults and those which children can choose for themselves.

- There are many activities to promote and improve children's reading, writing and numeracy skills. Effective teaching of letters and the sounds that they make helps children to make good progress in their reading and their writing. Children can name shapes using the correct mathematical language.
- Daily routines are well established. Children respond positively to the encouragement and instructions of adults and learn to behave well. Children know well how to stay safe.
- By working together as a team, early years leadership effectively ensures that the quality of teaching is good and that children learn well in a safe, secure and nurturing environment. They know the strengths of the provision and what is needed to improve it further. They ensure that the records of assessments of children's skills, such as those evident in children's learning journeys (logs of children's progress), are well organised and regularly reviewed in order to adapt provision so that children learn well.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	107758
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	461893

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	702
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Goodswen
Headteacher	Trevor Bowen
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2012
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