

Altrincham College of Arts

Green Lane, Timperley, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 8QW

Inspection dates

7–8 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a very inclusive school where every pupil is valued. Pupils receive high-quality support, particularly those who are vulnerable or experiencing difficult circumstances.
- The headteacher leads the school community in a nurturing way. He is ambitious for all of his pupils and has created an ethos in which they are encouraged to reach their potential.
- Governors make a strong contribution to the leadership of the school. They know the school well and provide effective support and challenge to the headteacher and his staff.
- Most pupils benefit from good teaching that enables them to learn effectively and be successful in their studies.
- Most pupils demonstrate an excellent attitude to learning. They are confident, thoughtful and articulate. Pupils value the support that they receive from their teachers, with whom they enjoy very positive working relationships.
- Not all teachers provide the right amount of challenge for their pupils. This sometimes leads to low-level disruption in lessons.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from high-quality provision. They are very well supported, particularly those who are disadvantaged. Students have a strong work ethic and value the effective teaching that they receive.
- In 2016, the progress that Year 11 pupils made and the standards that they achieved were broadly in line with national averages. A high proportion of current key stage 4 pupils are on track to reach their target grades at the end of their courses.
- Differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally are diminishing.
- Leaders do not monitor effectively enough the progress of different groups of pupils from their respective starting points, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This means that targeted support for individual pupils is not as sharp as it could be.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving. However, absence rates for these pupils remain higher than the national average.
- Pupils benefit from very effective careers education, information, advice and guidance. In the last three years, 100% of Year 11 pupils progressed to further education, employment or training.
- The daily 25 minutes of form time is not used purposefully enough across the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management further by:
 - monitoring more effectively the progress of all groups of pupils from their respective starting points, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that all teachers provide the right level of challenge for all of their pupils
 - ensuring that form time is used more purposefully across the school.
- Build on the improvements already made to diminish further the remaining achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally.
- Reduce further the number of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who do not attend school regularly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has created a nurturing and inclusive culture in which pupils can thrive. He has created a strong community ethos in which positive, mutually respectful relationships prevail. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and believe that it is well led.
- This is a very inclusive school where vulnerable pupils and those experiencing difficult circumstances receive particularly effective support. The relatively high proportion of children looked after is an indication that local authorities know that these vulnerable pupils will be supported and helped to achieve in this school.
- The headteacher and his staff are ambitious for all pupils to achieve well and gain qualifications that enable them to progress to further studies, training or employment. Underpinning this ambition for the pupils is a very effective careers education, information and guidance programme. In the last three years, every pupil in Year 11 has been successful in progressing to further education, employment or training, including a higher proportion than average moving on to apprenticeships.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. Senior leaders have an accurate overview of the strengths and the remaining areas requiring further improvement in teaching across the school. There are very clear processes in place to monitor the quality of teaching. Newly and recently qualified teachers speak highly of the support and guidance that they receive from their colleagues and leaders. They feel that professional development sessions have a positive impact on the quality of their teaching.
- The headteacher believes passionately that pupils should have access to a curriculum that provides a wide educational experience. For example, he is keen to ensure that a high proportion of pupils enjoy the benefits of studying a modern foreign language. In key stage 4, leaders ensure that all pupils take courses that are appropriate for their needs and abilities. The organisation of the curriculum has been reviewed for next year; one of the driving forces for this has been to ensure that it best serves the higher proportion of key stage 3 pupils who have high prior attainment.
- Pupils have access to an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, art, drama and music. In order to ensure that as many pupils as possible can participate in these after-school activities, a number of the school buses run at later times. Leaders ensure that as many pupils as possible have the opportunity to take part in residential experiences, several of which take place during the annual 'activities week'. These enrichment activities provide excellent opportunities for pupils' social and cultural development.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a high priority for leaders and is evident in the warm relationships that are prevalent throughout the school community. Throughout the year, pupils take part in a range of fund-raising activities for a number of local, national and international charities. The weekly religious education lesson for all pupils in Years 7 to 11 provides opportunities to raise awareness of moral and ethical issues, as well as to develop understanding of different faiths and beliefs. Leaders are keen to ensure that pupils are prepared effectively for life in modern Britain and respect for diversity in all forms is at the heart of this.
- The recently appointed head of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is raising the profile of this subject across the school. Currently, for many pupils, the PSHE education programme is delivered in form time and a number of 'drop-down' days. This is of some concern as the quality of the learning that takes place in some form groups is not good. Daily form time lasts 25 minutes and when this is not used effectively, it represents a considerable amount of lost time that could be used for personal development and wider learning.
- Leaders are working collaboratively on a project with other schools in the local authority to ensure that they use their pupil premium funding effectively. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils made better progress and attained higher standards than in the previous year. The achievement gaps between current disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally continue to diminish.
- Information provided by the school shows that pupils who are supported by the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium make accelerated progress. Leaders use the funding to provide a range of support strategies matched to the needs of individual pupils.
- Leaders ensure that the special educational needs funding is used effectively. Pupils supported by this funding generally make good progress during their time in school.
- Although leaders have plenty of information about the standards that pupils achieve, they do not focus enough on the ongoing progress that different groups of pupils make from their respective starting points. This is particularly the case in key stage 4. This means that targeted support for pupils to help them to make better progress is not as sharp as it could be.

Governance of the school

- The school benefits from strong governance. The governing body is a highly committed group whose members know the school extremely well and share the headteacher's vision of an inclusive school. Minutes of meetings provide evidence of how governors challenge leaders. Leaders have to explain the effectiveness of their actions to tackle specific areas of the school that require further improvement. Following disappointing results in English last year, they commissioned an external review of this subject. They were keen that the external reviewer reported directly to them so that they had a detailed understanding of the findings and could be satisfied that everything was being done to ensure that outcomes will be better this year. They have got the balance right between their strategic role and a closer involvement in the working of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that the procedures to ensure that all staff receive relevant training are robust. Staff have been trained in potential areas of risk for children and young people and they understand their responsibilities relating to safeguarding. Staff engage very effectively and appropriately with parents, carers and other stakeholders to make sure that all pupils are supported and safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Most pupils benefit from good teaching across a range of subjects that enables them to be successful in their studies. The positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils make a clear contribution to the quality of learning in the vast majority of lessons.
- In most lessons, teachers' skilful planning ensures that their pupils learn effectively and make good progress. Teachers use their expertise and passion for their subjects, coupled with their knowledge of their pupils, to engage and enthuse them in their learning.
- In key stage 4, teachers focus on developing the skills that pupils require to be successful in examinations. Teachers share their detailed knowledge of examination success criteria and assessment requirements with pupils so that they feel confident and fully prepared.
- Most teachers ensure that they challenge their pupils, particularly the most able, to achieve the highest standards. Pupils are given the opportunity, particularly in English and history, to develop their extended writing skills.
- Not all teachers provide enough challenge for their pupils. This is more evident in low-ability groups where some pupils, particularly boys, become disengaged and involved in low-level disruption.
- The work in most pupils' books is well presented and shows that they take pride in their learning. Leaders allow departments some flexibility in how they apply the principles of the marking and assessment policy. Inspection evidence indicates that there is some variability in the effectiveness of departments' application of the policy. For example, in history, effective feedback has a clear impact on improving pupils' achievement; this is not the case, however, in geography.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors commented on how supportive and caring their teachers are. Key stage 4 pupils value the time that their teachers take to really get to know them. One pupil said, 'They really go the extra mile to help us.'

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils thrive in the nurturing ethos of the school.
- Staff know their pupils very well and are willing to 'go above and beyond' in the level of care that they provide, particularly for those who are vulnerable or experiencing difficult circumstances.
- Children looked after are given extremely effective personalised support. Staff are caring but ambitious in their aspirations for these pupils.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors felt that the culture in school is one in which most would feel comfortable to be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. Although this is the case, some pupils in key stage 4 are keen to do even more to celebrate this aspect of diversity.
- Incidents of bullying are rare. On the few occasions where it does occur, pupils feel that there could sometimes be better communication between staff and pupils to resolve the situation.
- Leaders ensure that the welfare of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision is a high priority. There is very effective communication between school staff and the providers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, friendly and generally behave well around the school. During break- and lunchtime, they socialise in a mature and calm way and they interact well with each other and staff.
- Behaviour in lessons is typically good, with pupils demonstrating very positive attitudes to their learning. On the few occasions where this is not the case, this is usually because they are not being challenged enough, which leads to disengagement from their learning.
- Staff in the student support centre work effectively with the small number of pupils who demonstrate challenging behaviour. Only a very low number of pupils are ever excluded from school.
- The overall attendance figure is broadly in line with the national average. Leaders are now taking a more strategic approach to improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Actions taken by the school's own recently appointed educational welfare officer have already had an impact in this area. She works closely with parents, providing the right balance of challenge and support. The proportion of these pupils who are persistently absent has fallen since her appointment. Further improving the attendance of these groups of pupils is a high priority for leaders and governors.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2016, the standards that pupils achieved and the progress that they made across a wide range of subjects were broadly in line with national averages. Pupils made much better progress in mathematics than they had in the previous year. Outcomes in science were particularly strong, as were those in art and design, business studies and physical education.
- The school's assessment information indicates that a high proportion of current key stage 4 pupils are on track to reach their target grades at the end of their courses. This includes geography and modern foreign languages, where outcomes were not as strong last year. Pupils in Year 10 are making particularly strong progress across a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils in English across all year groups are making good progress. Information from mock examinations and other moderated assessments indicates that Year 11 pupils will achieve good grades in the summer. Leaders and governors carried out a full investigation following disappointing results in this subject last year, including a comprehensive external review of the department. They were satisfied that these results were not caused by weaknesses in teaching and leadership but were related to issues with examination board grade boundaries. Inspection evidence supports the headteacher's view that leadership and teaching in this subject are strong.
- The 'upgrade programme' provides support for pupils in Year 11 who underachieve. The school's assessment information shows that this has a positive impact on pupils' progress. However, leaders accept that this support could be targeted more effectively if they monitored the progress of different groups of pupils from their respective starting points more sharply.
- The most able pupils benefit from high-quality teaching. Most teachers ensure that these pupils are challenged to make good progress and achieve high grades.
- Differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are diminishing. Leaders' actions to bring this about are particularly effective with Year 10. However, leaders accept that this needs to happen more rapidly across the school.
- During their time in school, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support and this has a positive impact on the progress that they make. However, as with other pupils, this support could be targeted even more effectively if leaders monitored pupils' progress more sharply from their different starting points.
- Staff monitor closely the small group of pupils who attend alternative provision off site. The activities that the pupils take part in are appropriate for their abilities and interests. The qualifications that pupils gain on the motor mechanics course offer a clear progression through to apprenticeships. The childcare-related programme provides opportunities to develop skills and practical experience that will help pupils with their future training in this area.

- Destination information for pupils leaving Year 11 shows that they are being very well prepared to move into further education, training or employment. Leaders ensure that all pupils receive high-quality careers education, advice and guidance.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The school's sixth form provides an inclusive and aspirational education for its students. Leadership of the sixth form is effective and students benefit from their post-16 experience.
- All students follow appropriate personalised study programmes that enable them to move on to higher education, training or full-time employment after leaving the sixth form. The curriculum enables students to take a combination of academic and vocational courses to suit their abilities and interests.
- High-quality teaching means that students currently on roll are making good progress. The school's assessment information shows that students in Year 13 are on course to achieve significantly improved outcomes, in both academic and vocational subjects, compared with last year. Inspection evidence supports this view.
- This year, leaders have introduced a stronger system for tracking students' progress and giving them feedback. As a result, students' motivation has increased. Leaders acknowledge that some departments use this more effectively than others but that consistency is likely to improve as the system becomes further embedded.
- All students in the sixth form are supported very well, particularly those who are disadvantaged. For example, the 'Aspire 6' programme was set up this year to support the most able disadvantaged students in applying to Russell Group universities. Leaders are confident that students will meet the requirements of the offers that students have received from Manchester University to study medicine, law and accountancy as part of this programme.
- Students are mature and articulate and have a strong work ethic. They speak very positively about their experiences in the sixth form. Those who spoke to inspectors described their teachers as 'massively supportive'. Students know where they are in relation to their target grades, and what they need to do to achieve them. Students value the support, advice and guidance that they receive when applying for university, further training or employment.
- Students benefit from a range of enrichment activities, including access to relevant work-experience placements. The school has recently introduced the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme gold award, and approximately a quarter of the students are taking part in this.
- All students who have not attained at least a grade C in English or mathematics receive appropriate teaching and support. Consequently, the success rates when students re-take these examinations are high, particularly in English.

School details

Unique reference number	138614
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	10012457

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	949
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Aubrey
Headteacher	Mr Peter Brooks
Telephone number	0161 9807173
Website	www.altrinchamcollege.com
Email address	PBS@altrinchamcollege.trafford.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Altrincham College of Arts converted to become an academy on 1 September 2012. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.

- It is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and therefore supported by the pupil premium is in line with the national average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average.
- At the time of the inspection, 12 pupils follow alternative education provision off the school site at Manchester College and as part of the Trafford 'Teens and Tots' programme.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects, including some joint observations with senior leaders. They carried out a work scrutiny with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with four groups of pupils, and talked with others informally during breaks and lunchtimes. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders, classroom teachers and newly and recently qualified teachers. A meeting was held with the chair, vice-chair and three other members of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 135 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, its improvement plan, information about the school's performance and a selection of policies.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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