

Almondbury Community School

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

Inspection dates

14–15 June 2017

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement since the last inspection has not improved enough. By the end of key stages 1, 2 and 4, pupils' outcomes remain below average.
- Although improving, the progress of current primary and secondary pupils is inconsistent across years and subjects.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able is not increasing quickly enough.
- The quality of teaching varies too much across the school. Teaching is not routinely challenging enough. It does not encourage pupils to think deeply about their learning, and work is not sufficiently well matched to the different abilities of pupils.
- A minority of pupils do not concentrate in some lessons. This results in some low-level disruption, particularly where teaching is insufficiently interesting and challenging.
- Attendance is rising too slowly, especially that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Although the quality of leadership across the school is improving, not all leaders are equally effective at improving teaching and pupils' achievement in their areas of responsibility.
- Not all teachers are held rigorously to account by leaders for pupils' learning and progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and wider leadership team have created a positive learning environment, which makes a strong contribution to pupils' confidence and enjoyment. Expectations of staff and pupils have been raised. The capacity to improve the school is growing.
- Pupils are well cared for and feel safe. Most pupils are respectful of one another and of adults, and they are polite to visitors.
- The school's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. The vast majority of pupils understand what it means to be a good citizen.
- Early years' provision is good. Children make good progress from their starting points, and learn to cooperate effectively, both indoors and outdoors.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is at least good and leads to all pupils achieving well and attaining at least average outcomes, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan and implement activities that are well matched to pupils' needs
 - check regularly on the progress of pupils in lessons, especially of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - have consistently high expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and insist that all pupils respond to oral and written feedback when it is designed to improve their work
 - consistently challenge the most able pupils.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management on pupils' outcomes by:
 - developing fully the skills and expertise of all leaders, including governors, so that all are successful in securing good teaching and pupils' good progress in their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that performance management arrangements are consistently implemented with equal rigour by all leaders.
- Improve attendance, so that it is at least in line with the national average, by building on recently introduced strategies aimed at reducing absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Significant staffing changes, including new appointments to middle and senior leaders' posts and the re-structuring of the governing body, have hindered the pace of improvement since the last inspection.
- New arrangements to check the quality of teaching and rates of progress that pupils make across all key stages have been implemented under the leadership of the current headteacher. However, several key leaders have not been in place long enough to embed these arrangements, to have a sustained effect.
- Leaders have reacted energetically to poor key stage 1, key stage 2 and GCSE results in 2016. The headteacher, supported by an able leadership team and increasingly well-informed governance, has acted to address some weak teaching across the school. Parents, pupils and staff recognise, as shown in their responses to the Ofsted online questionnaires, the positive changes in the running of the school.
- The headteacher has reviewed key posts of responsibility and secured good-quality additional support from the local authority and the Pennine Teaching School Alliance. Leaders' roles, at all levels, are now well defined and understood. The impact of these leaders is becoming evident through the overall rise in current pupils' outcomes across all key stages. This demonstrates that the present leaders have the necessary skills and abilities to bring about the further rapid improvements required.
- Senior leaders know the school well. They are clear about the areas of the school's work that require improvement. They have taken appropriate action to address shortcomings in teaching and learning, but recognise the acceleration required in this work. Leaders have also introduced measures to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments, including crosschecking with other schools and organisations.
- Systems for managing the performance of staff are well organised. Nonetheless, not all leaders hold staff to account, with equal rigour, for developing the quality of their teaching and for making sure that the pupils they teach make good progress.
- Teachers benefit from opportunities to contribute to the development of new teaching practice by working collaboratively with other colleagues. Although these measures have not yet secured enough good teaching or pupils' good progress in all key stages, there is evidence that teaching is improving.
- Leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching. Additional support is given to those teachers who do not meet leaders' expectations. Staff appreciate the support they receive for their professional development. Newly qualified and trainee teachers also value the support they receive.
- Middle and senior leaders are beginning to play increasingly prominent roles in helping to move the school forward. Not all are yet sufficiently confident to ensure that the regular checks they make on pupils' progress, and the quality of teaching in their teams, bring about the necessary rapid improvements.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils access an appropriate range of courses,

academic and vocational, to meet their needs and aspirations. In addition, pupils benefit from an array of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities in sports, music and performing arts that help them to develop their skills, talents and interests. A very small minority of pupils are provided with bespoke, off-site provision that successfully meets their individual needs.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and understanding of life in modern Britain is successfully promoted. Well-organised sequences of lessons promote pupils' personal, social, emotional and health education across the primary and secondary phases. Furthermore, the assembly programme involves a wide range of visitors from the local community. In addition, the House system provides pupils with many opportunities to take on individual challenges and collective responsibilities. These experiences ensure a suitable focus on tackling discrimination and promoting tolerant attitudes, as well as appreciating the importance of rules and the freedom of speech.
- Senior leaders recognise that arrangements to check the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils have not been rigorous enough. As a consequence, they had already commissioned an external review of these arrangements at the time of the inspection.
- Additional funding to enhance the learning and progress of pupils who enter Year 7 with below-average attainment is effectively deployed. The 'nurture' group and the additional weekly reading and mathematical sessions are improving targeted pupils' levels of confidence and basic skills.
- Additional physical education and sport funding is also making a difference. Increasing numbers of pupils across the school participate in regular team games and individual competitions. Teachers' knowledge and confidence in teaching physical education and sport are also improving, through working alongside expert sports coaches and practitioners.
- The discrete funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is checked carefully for impact. Bespoke learning arrangements out of lessons are regularly confirmed to ensure that individual pupils make good progress. However, the effectiveness of the provision made for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities across the wider curriculum, in daily lessons, is not as rigorously assessed.
- Leaders' strong focus on the care and support of all pupils influences positively the values and the climate of the school. Good relationships exist between most pupils and staff at all levels.
- Careers guidance is proving effective for pupils in key stages 3 and 4. Pupils spoke positively about the support received during their options process. A range of visitors from universities and the world of work regularly promote opportunities in education, employment and training.

Governance of the school

- In the past, governors have not acted quickly or robustly enough to tackle the weaknesses that have resulted in the school's poor performance in examination results.

- Since the last inspection, the committees of the governing body have been re-structured and new governors appointed.
- Present governance is developing a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the priorities to move it forward at pace. Governors are ambitious for all pupils and families and are determined to improve rapidly the outcomes for all pupils.
- Governors are increasingly confident in holding school leaders and managers to account, and they achieve an appropriate balance of challenge and support.
- Governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe, and they ensure that staff training is up to date and relevant.
- Before the inspection, governors had commissioned an external review of governance, in order to further improve their work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff training is constantly updated, including the 'Prevent' duty training.
- Leaders follow rigorously the school's safeguarding procedures, and liaise closely with the relevant external organisations, including the local safeguarding children's board.
- Leaders ensure a safe environment for pupils through regular risk assessments. Staff are vigilant in keeping pupils safe.
- The school's links with individual families, where pupils live in particularly vulnerable circumstances, are particularly well established. Staff are extremely dedicated to minimise the degree of risk associated with these situations. They make themselves readily available throughout the school day, and beyond, to ensure that all pupils and families receive the support required.
- Staff have a thorough understanding of the implications of the latest version of 'Keeping children safe in education.' They use the advice and information to constantly guide their work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable across all key stages. Some teaching fails to match work well to the level of pupils' ability and needs. Consequently, some pupils lose interest and do not make the progress of which they are capable. Where there are inconsistencies, many leaders are acting decisively to address these.
- Some teachers do not take pupils' prior knowledge, understanding, skills or abilities into sufficient account. This results in some of the most able pupils not being stretched and challenged enough.
- Some teachers do not check carefully how well pupils are learning in lessons in the primary and secondary phases. Consequently, pupils' misconceptions persist or their understanding is not secured. This is particularly the case for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This also results in some pupils not being moved on to more demanding

work when they are ready. As a result, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

- Some teachers use questioning skilfully to explore and extend pupils' understanding, getting them to think more deeply about their learning. However, in other instances, teachers accept limited, superficial responses and do not challenge pupils further.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge. However, expectations about presentation in pupils' books are inconsistent. When poorly presented work is accepted, pupils' readiness to make a greater effort begins to slip. Teachers' expectations of pupils' responses to the oral and written feedback that they receive, in order to improve their work, are inconsistent. As a result, opportunities are missed for many pupils to improve the work that they initially produce.
- Good relationships exist between most teachers and pupils. This fosters generally positive attitudes to learning and encourages many pupils to try their best. Often pupils engage keenly with tasks and activities. However, in lessons that do not sufficiently challenge and stimulate pupils, low-level disruption occurs and hinders pupils' progress.
- There is a growing emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects, in both the primary and secondary phases. Teachers increasingly check and correct pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar and provide opportunities for pupils to practise key calculation skills. The teaching of phonics across key stages 1 and 2 is improving strongly. Many teachers across the school provide regular opportunities for pupils to read aloud, check their understanding and help them to correctly pronounce specialist words and terminology. As a consequence, most pupils become confident and fluent readers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Many lessons, and the good range of educational visits and experiences, stimulate pupils to think about the world around them. As a result, pupils develop a strong appreciation of the beliefs and viewpoints of people from different backgrounds, faiths and cultures, as an essential part of their preparation for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils have a good awareness of the concepts of freedom and democracy and of Britain's parliamentary system. They are keen to talk about their school responsibilities as play leaders, peer mentors, book buddies and House councillors.
- The school operates as a cohesive community. Most pupils mix happily with each other and enjoy each other's company. They are generally well mannered and welcoming of visitors.
- Pupils feel safe in the school and well cared for. They have confidence in staff to help them with any problems that may arise.
- Pupils are confident in their understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are clear about the importance of keeping safe online, the precautions to take when using social media and when using a mobile phone.

- Pupils understand about different types of bullying and know that bullying is something that is repeated regularly. Pupils said that when rare incidents of bullying occur, they are dealt with quickly and successfully by staff.
- House leaders provide consistently high-quality support for pupils who experience social, emotional and mental health problems or who have particular concerns.
- The school's personal, social, emotional and health programmes include regular visitors from local community services. Daily reflection provides pupils in the primary and secondary phases with comprehensive information about how to lead a healthy lifestyle and the importance of forging supportive relationships.
- Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 benefit from well-organised and bespoke careers information, advice and guidance. They feel well supported during the options process and take full advantage of work-experience opportunities in Year 10.
- The school's work with vulnerable pupils, including its use of alternative provision, has ensured that virtually all pupils continue into education, training or employment by the time they leave Year 11.
- The very small minority of pupils who attend alternative provision are well supported to make good progress on the courses they are studying. Leaders are vigilant in monitoring pupils' attendance and behaviour when attending alternative provision.
- The school site is well kept. Pupils respect the learning environment, which is clean and free from graffiti and litter.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- When learning activities require pupils to work on their own or in groups, a minority become chatty and lose focus. When teaching lacks stimulation and expectation, the poor attitude of some pupils remains unchallenged.
- Low-level disruption in lessons too often prevents pupils from making the progress they should. Pupils said that behaviour is improving, but varies depending on the teacher.
- In many classes across the school, pupils' behaviour is more positive because teaching ensures that pupils are interested in their work and are able to concentrate more effectively.
- The use of derogatory language is rare in lessons and around the school. At break and lunchtime, pupils are largely respectful to staff and to their peers.
- Movement between lessons is generally purposeful. Most pupils arrive punctually to lessons and are appropriately equipped for learning.
- Whole school absence is rising and is slightly above the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are regularly absent is above average. Staff are applying new strategies to improve attendance, but with insufficient impact to date.
- Pupils and parents responding to the Ofsted online questionnaires and parents completing the school's questionnaires indicate that, while behaviour in lessons and

around school has improved since the last inspection it is still not good. Inspectors agree.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 were below national averages in 2016. Although present rates of progress are improving, outcomes are not rising rapidly enough and remain below average.
- Although end of key stage 4 attainment has risen since the last inspection, Year 11 pupils did not achieve as well as they should across most subjects, including in English and mathematics, in 2016. The proportion of pupils gaining a GCSE grade C or higher in English and mathematics was below the national average, and especially so for pupils with high-ability starting points. Too few pupils achieved the highest grades.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils, including those from high-ability starting points, across the school was much lower than that of similar groups of pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in all key stages in 2016 made insufficient overall progress. They did not receive sufficiently well-targeted support in daily lessons. However, school information indicates that bespoke out-of-class provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was much more effective.
- The robust actions leaders have taken since September 2016 to secure better outcomes for pupils and improvements in the quality of teaching are accelerating the progress of pupils currently in the school, across all key stages. Targeted teaching for specific groups of pupils is helping pupils to address the deficits in their linguistic and mathematical skills and knowledge.
- School data and inspection evidence, including work seen in pupils' books, shows that across all key stages current pupils' overall rates of progress are improving. Standards are on the up, especially in reading.
- Despite this, pupils' achievement still requires further improvement. This is especially so for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and the most able. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching for these pupils, and in overall teaching in most years, continue to hinder some pupils' progress. Differences between the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and their peers, while diminishing in some classes, remain too wide.
- Pupils who have fallen behind by the time they reach Year 7 make increasingly effective progress in developing key literacy and numeracy skills. This is because additional funding is used effectively to provide one-to-one and small group support that meets their needs well.
- The very small minority of pupils who attend courses away from the school site benefit from successful provision. Most secure a range of worthwhile qualifications.

Early years provision

Good

- The vast majority of children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. By the end of the Reception Year, the proportion reaching a good level of development is closing on the national average. Children are increasingly well prepared to start Year 1.
- Children settle quickly and become confident learners because routines and expectations in the early years are well defined. They behave well and show respect for and patience towards one another.
- Children are encouraged to help each other with all of the planned activities. They confidently explore all of the stimulating resources, indoors and outdoors.
- The vast majority of the adults ask questions that encourage children to think for themselves and develop confidence in communicating with each other.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know the children well. They check regularly how well children are doing and identify quickly how they can develop further.
- The regular modelling of sounds and actions by all of the adults particularly lends confidence to children who are new to learning English to catch up with their peers. Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively alongside their peers. Pupil premium funding is used successfully to provide disadvantaged pupils with additional support and resources. The most able children are also challenged increasingly well to ensure that they make good progress.
- The leadership of the early years is effective. Staff work collaboratively across the different classes and ensure that the quality of teaching and provision is of a consistently good standard. Relationships are positive. Children are kept safe because all staff adhere closely to safety procedures and risk assessments.
- Early years' leaders have recognised that there are inconsistencies in the effectiveness of some of the outdoor activities in reinforcing children's literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders have identified scope to improve the impact of interactions between some adults and children, on children's communication and language skills, and on their abilities to sustain levels of concentration and perseverance.

School details

Unique reference number	107758
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10031017

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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	720
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Goodswen
Headteacher	Trevor Bowen
Telephone number	01484 426666
Website	http://www.almondburycs.org.uk/
Email address	office.almondburycs@kirkleeseducation.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- In the secondary phase, the school is much smaller than the average-sized school. In the primary phase, it is larger than 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 below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is

above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. A similar proportion of pupils have an education, health and care plan as seen nationally.
- The school largely uses two alternative providers for a very small number of pupils: Brian Jackson College and Ethos College, in Kirklees.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been widespread changes in staffing, including the appointment of new senior and middle leaders. The governing body's committees have been restructured and new governors have taken up roles.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a wide range of lessons across the school, looking extensively at pupils' work in all lessons. Additionally, two visits to lessons were made with school leaders.
- Alongside school leaders, inspectors reviewed pupils' progress data and pupils' work in books, information about the performance of teachers, documents pertaining to safety and behaviour and information pertaining to safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons, at break times, and met with groups of pupils separately.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and governors. A discussion was also held with the representatives from the local authority and from the Pennine Teaching School Alliance.
- Inspectors took account of the 49 replies from pupils, the 60 replies from staff and the 33 replies from parents to Ofsted's questionnaires. Inspectors also considered recent school surveys of the views of parents of the work of the school.

Inspection team

Andy Swallow, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Graham Crerar	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Heaton	Ofsted Inspector

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