

Aspire Academy

Annandale Road, Kingston-Upon-Hull HU9 5DE

Inspection dates

6–7 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- In just under three years, leaders and governors have established a good school for vulnerable pupils who have failed at other schools. Aspects of the school are exceptional.
- The local governing committee have a tight grip on the development of the school. They challenge leaders and the trust board to ensure all pupils get the best possible deal.
- Teaching captures the interests of most pupils so they develop positive attitudes to learning. As a result, most make good progress in mathematics and English. In 2016, a third of Year 11 pupils achieved five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal development as a result of the skilful support they receive and the range of subjects they study. Most pupils make significant improvements in how they manage their emotions and responses to situations they find difficult.
- Pupils feel safe and are safe in school. Staff work effectively with other agencies and go 'above and beyond' to support pupils who have experienced traumatising life events.
- Pupils who have education, health and care plans make good progress. However, governors do not track how effectively specific funding for these pupils is used.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. Structured support for pupils who have significant gaps in their reading skills ensures that some make exceptional gains in reading both for pleasure and across the curriculum.
- Staff successfully ensure that pupils develop respect for people from different backgrounds and faiths. Equally, most pupils respond positively to the careers advice they receive and the vast majority move on to appropriate further education courses or apprenticeships.
- Most pupils make good gains in their attendance, often from very low starting points. However, overall attendance remains low. A few pupils do not sustain their initial enthusiasm for attending regularly.
- Leaders and staff use information they collect about individual pupils to ensure that pupils get the support they need. However, the use of this information to work out which approaches are most effective for different groups of pupils is not embedded. Some information is not recorded in sufficient detail.
- Some pupils, particularly the most able, do not make the progress they could over a range of subjects. This is because some teaching does not challenge them, particularly in mathematical reasoning and scientific thinking. Similarly, some pupils do not get sufficient chance to develop the skills needed to keep going when learning is hard.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to achieve outstanding outcomes for all pupils, leaders and governors need to:
 - ensure that all aspects of the pupils' learning and personal development are recorded and collated accurately and in detail
 - use the information they collect to evaluate which approaches to their work are working well, or not, for different groups of pupils and use their evaluation to inform the school's development plans
 - ensure that additional funding for pupils who have education, health and care plans is used to provide pupils with the specific support they need.
- Improve the progress pupils make by:
 - ensuring all teaching is as effective as the most effective
 - making sure all teachers use the information they have about pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills to move them on to their next steps in learning
 - ensuring teachers challenge the most able pupils to think more deeply about their work, develop mathematical reasoning skills and think scientifically
 - developing pupils' independence and resilience when tackling work that challenges them.
- Further improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The principal's and governors' extreme determination and clarity of purpose ensures that vulnerable pupils succeed. They skilfully use experienced leaders and quickly develop staff new to leadership. As a result, they have embedded a strong culture among all staff that pupils will achieve well and overcome the difficulties that life has thrown at them. They are rapidly moving towards fulfilling their aim for pupils to leave school with skills, attitudes and qualifications that enable them to stand 'shoulder to shoulder' with all other pupils when in line for further education or employment opportunities.
- Leaders have a solid view of what constitutes effective teaching in their school. An exceptionally robust quality assurance process generates valuable information, which leaders use to prioritise the next steps for individual staff development, for individual pupils and for whole-school developments. This approach has enabled senior leaders to identify staff with the right skills to lead different aspects of the school and to ensure that staff are trained to a good level. Several staff have achieved qualified teacher status in recent months and are now developing their leadership skills. This is a remarkable achievement in the short time the school has been opened.
- The successful approach to leading and developing effective teaching and pastoral strategies has energised the staff team. Over three-quarters of the staff responded to the online survey. They were extremely positive about the school's leadership and the support and development opportunities they are given, which in this school results in the positive impact they have on the pupils' lives.
- Leaders of special educational needs and the pastoral aspect of the school's work are equally effective in terms of the outcomes pupils achieve. Leaders and staff use the information they collect about individual pupils to develop specific interventions. As yet, the evaluation of the information to inform whole-school developments is not as refined as the leadership of teaching.
- Leaders have developed and continue to grow a curriculum that captures the hearts and minds of the pupils. This is because they have achieved a successful balance between subjects and timetables that juggle academic study, pupils' personal development and their development of vocational skills. Critically, the balance responds well to the needs of each pupil. The creation of the Loft Space has reduced the resources tied up in alternative provision. The additional space also provides a base for activities for key stage 3 pupils that accelerates their personal development.
- Pupils experience a wealth of opportunities to ensure their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development both within academic subjects and through additional enrichment activities. Some pupils find it difficult to overcome externally influenced prejudice but, through the opportunities provided, learn to accept and tolerate views that are different to their own. As a pupil simply put it, 'I'm not going to be homosexual but I now know it's OK for other people.'
- The small number of parents who responded to Parent View were extremely complimentary about the difference the school has made to the lives of their children

and their families. The school's own record of parents' views is equally positive.

Governance of the school

- The local governing committee, ably led by a knowledgeable chairperson, know the school well. They request detailed information from leaders about all aspects of the school's work. They use the information to challenge and support leaders and, in doing so, ensure a process of continual improvement. Crucially, they know that in order for the pupils to leave school prepared for successful adult lives, they have to achieve as well as mainstream pupils, academically and in their personal development, despite their vulnerable circumstances.
- Governors effectively balance how they hold leaders to account for the work of the school with developing plans to sustain and further improve the school. They question and challenge the Sentamu Academy Learning Trust (SALT) members and directors, to ensure that the specific needs of the pupils are considered both in the short and long term. For example, they have ensured sufficient investment in two additional sites to reduce the reliance on alternative providers and address the increasing need for Year 6 and Year 7 places.
- Governors ensure that the performance management of teachers is robust and tightly linked to the school's priorities. The procedure used ensures staff pay is appropriately linked to their performance.
- Although the school does not receive the pupil premium grant for disadvantaged pupils, governors ensure that leaders report on the outcomes of these pupils. Equally, governors receive and challenge detailed information about the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, governors have not developed a method of ensuring that the specific funding for pupils who have education, health and care plans is directly linked to meeting these pupils' additional needs.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Robust recording, timely referrals to other services and a high level of personalised support for pupils underpin the deeply embedded culture of safeguarding in this school.
- Pupils say they feel safe and describe how they learn to keep themselves safe by making the 'right' choices. This includes when they are online or out in the community. Relationships and sex education is appropriately unambiguous and ensures that pupils learn about consent and respect in different relationships.
- Leaders ensure that sufficient staff are available to support pupils who are learning to manage the difficulties life has thrown at them. Pupils describe this support as their 'other family', because they are so confident in the care and attention they receive, particularly when troubled or upset.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Effective teaching in this school is characterised by teachers' sound subject knowledge, backed up by a deep understanding of pupils' different needs and the most effective approach to secure the best learning from each pupil. Respectful and trusting relationships between pupils and staff contribute significantly to the exceptional progress some pupils make in some subjects.
- Leaders and teachers use information from pupils' key stage 2 tests and from their previous schools alongside their own assessments to set progress targets for pupils. Regular assessments are undertaken to ensure that pupils make sufficient progress to make up for lost time either through poor attendance or through other disruptions to their learning. When pupils fall behind or show signs of switching off, leaders intervene by changing their learning programmes and offering personalised support in specific subjects. Most pupils respond positively to this approach and learn well.
- Inspectors saw, both during lesson visits and in pupils' books, examples of challenge to pupils to think deeply and work out answers independently. For example, in a motor vehicle maintenance lesson, pupils had to think of ways to answer questions without prompts from the teacher. Pupils thrived on this level of challenge and made clear gains in their understanding. Importantly, however, this level of challenge is not consistent enough over different subjects.
- Many pupils' initial assessments show gaps in their reading skills. The individual support for reading, combined with teachers rewarding pupils for volunteering to read aloud in class, is highly effective. Leaders' information shows that in 2015/16 over a third of key stage 3 pupils and over a quarter of key stage 4 pupils made the equivalent of five years or more progress in their reading within the year. Most teachers successfully match reading materials to pupils' level of skills, although this is not always the case. Similarly, there is some inconsistency in how well phonic strategies are used to support reading and spelling.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Crucially, leaders and staff strive to understand why pupils react negatively in different situations. They use their understanding to plan effective interventions and support for pupils. As a result, many pupils make significant and sustained progress in their personal development.
- Pupils are confident that the small amount of bullying that occurs is dealt with quickly and effectively. Leaders' approach to restoring relationships between perpetrators and victims is effective. All pupils spoken to knew who to talk to if concerned about anything.
- Pupils described how well staff get to know them and how carefully staff listen to what they say. Most pupils are reassured that class tutors have daily contact with their parents because they know staff and parents work together to help them overcome the difficulties they experience.
- Leaders ensure that there is good support in place for pupils' social, emotional and

mental health needs. A mental health nurse is employed part-time in the school to ensure that pupils get the support they need. This is in addition to the school's close work with the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS).

- Leaders are diligent in their checks on the safety and welfare of pupils when they are based at other settings. School staff have daily contact with pupils as they deliver the English and mathematics content of the curriculum to the pupils while at other settings.
- Records of some aspects of pupils' welfare are not sufficiently detailed so the information cannot be used to inform further developments in provision. As result, some pupils make good rather than outstanding gains in this area of their development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils are keen to learn because well-planned lessons engage their interests and closely match their aptitudes.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school and during social times can be a little lively at times but, overall, pupils are well supported to manage themselves in an orderly and thoughtful manner. Pupils demonstrate pride in themselves, their own and others' achievements and their school. High-quality displays of pupils' work and photographs of the extended opportunities they enjoy are respected by the pupils because they are proud of their achievements. The vast majority of pupils wear their uniform with pride and need little encouragement to keep smart during the day.
- Leaders limit the use of fixed-term exclusion to the most serious incidents. For a few pupils, brief spells of home tuition are used as a sanction for behaviour that disrupts the learning of others. Four hours of direct teaching in the pupils' homes reinforces important messages about appropriate behaviour, while not curtailing their opportunities to learn and make progress.
- Staff are well trained in a range of strategies to support pupils if they are close to losing control of their behaviour. Consequently, the use of physical interventions is limited. Staff are equally well trained in safe and appropriate techniques to restrain pupils for their own and others' safety when this is needed. Leaders monitor the use and frequency of restraint procedures and inspectors had no concerns about the appropriateness of this aspect of the school's work. However, more precise and detailed records would enable leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures in place for individual pupils.
- Most staff are diligent in consistently applying the school's rewards and sanctions policy. This level of consistency helps to support pupils' ability to manage their own behaviour. However, as with some aspects of teaching, inconsistency in some staff's approach, for example in checking pupils' swearing, hampers outstanding progress in this area.
- Most pupils have had very poor attendance at their previous schools. Leaders' and staff's work to improve attendance is exceptionally robust. Class tutors and student liaison officers contact all pupils to ensure they have set off for school on time. Staff collect pupils who are reluctant to leave their beds. As a result, most pupils' attendance improves significantly shortly after admission. However, the improvements in

attendance are not always sustained, so overall attendance remains low.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2016, the school's second year of operation, one third of Year 11 pupils achieved five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics. Regardless of the time they had been on roll, 97% of pupils achieved at least a level 1 qualification in English and mathematics. This represents good progress from most pupils' starting points at the time of their admission and, importantly, represents good progress from their key stage 2 test results. These results represent a significant improvement from the results achieved in 2015 for a similar group of pupils.
- Pupils' current progress is also good over a range of subjects and is strong in English and mathematics. Overall, progress is not outstanding because it is not as strong in some subjects and the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to reach higher GCSE grades. Similarly, in key stage 3, pupils are not challenged well enough to make strong progress, particularly in mathematical reasoning and scientific thinking.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have education, health and care plans make similarly strong progress when compared to other pupils both academically and in their personal development.
- Leaders' assessment information relating to pupils' socialisation, participation and endurance confirms the views of pupils, staff and parents. The effective mix of skilful nurturing and the balanced range of subjects and enrichment opportunities ensures that the vast majority of pupils make consistently good progress in their personal development.
- A small but significant number of key stage 3 pupils are successfully re-integrated into mainstream schools. Staff are skilled at identifying when pupils demonstrate, through their attitudes to learning, that they have developed the social and emotional skills needed to succeed in a mainstream school.
- As a result of secure academic progress and good personal development, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Personalised advice and guidance, coupled with supported visits to a range of potential post-16 opportunities results in the overwhelming majority of pupils moving on to further education or apprenticeships. Leaders ensure that staff continue to support pupils for up to a year after they have left the school to ensure they can succeed in their new placements.

School details

Unique reference number	141037
Local authority	City of Kingston upon Hull
Inspection number	10031946

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

Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	10 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Andrew Milner
Principal	Christopher Mulqueen
Telephone number	01482 318789
Website	www.aspirehull.com
Email address	chrismulqueen@aspirehull.com
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.
- The school opened as an alternative provider free school in September 2014 in temporary accommodation and moved into a new purpose-built school in January 2015. In September 2016, the school opened a smaller site to provide sport and vocational learning known as the Loft Space.
- The school is part of the Sentamu Academy Learning Trust and is sponsored by the Diocese of York Educational Trust.
- The majority of pupils are admitted following exclusion from mainstream schools or because they are at risk of exclusion from mainstream school. The majority of pupils are in key stage 4 and are registered solely at the school. The majority of key stage 3

pupils are dual-registered with a mainstream school.

- Most of the pupil places are commissioned by the City of Kingston upon Hull local authority. A small number of places are commissioned by other local authorities or directly by mainstream secondary schools. The number of pupils on roll varies as pupils start and leave at any point during the school year.
- A very high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. However, the school does not receive pupil premium funding for any pupil; nor does the school receive catch-up funding.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British boys. A small proportion of pupils are from a range of different ethnic heritages and a small number speak English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection, six pupils were children looked after by the local authority and 37% of pupils and their families have direct support from children's social services.
- All of the pupils need support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities and a high proportion have education, health and care plans. The vast majority of pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- A very small number of pupils use alternative providers, St Patricks and Vulcan, for part of their individual programme.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a range of lessons covering Years 7 to 10 and a range of subjects, including the vocational options and lessons taking place at the Loft Space. Joint lesson visits were undertaken with the principal and vice-principal. During lesson visits inspectors listened to pupils read and reviewed the work in their books.
- Inspectors met with groups of Year 10 and Year 11 pupils and talked informally with pupils at break and lunchtime. Year 11 pupils were on study leave but all were in school for an examination on the morning of the first day.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, the executive principal representing Sentamu Academy Learning Trust and three members of the local governing committee, including the chair of the committee.
- A wide range of documents were reviewed relating to all aspects of the school's work, including the minutes of the governing committee, safeguarding records and records relating to the leaders' own quality assurance of the school's work.
- The views of the 47 staff who responded to the online staff survey were considered alongside the three free-text responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents).

Inspection team

Susan Hayter, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Pauline Rowland

Ofsted Inspector

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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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