

# Alde Valley School

Seaward Avenue, Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4BG

## Inspection dates

20–21 September 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Since the multi-academy trust (MAT) took over the school, there has been rapid improvement in pupils' achievement and behaviour. The quality of teaching has improved markedly. The progress of pupils over the last two years has been at least in line with that of other pupils nationally.
- The headteacher has gained the confidence of staff, pupils, parents and the local community. The reputation of the school has risen and as a result pupil numbers are increasing.
- Leaders have successfully driven dramatic improvement over the last two years. This is apparent across all aspects of the school, but some subjects and other areas of provision have been more successful than others.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with that found in other secondary schools.
- Pupils' behaviour and conduct in lessons and around the school are exemplary.
- The 16 to 19 provision is in a state of transition. A very small group remain in the sixth form. Leaders have prioritised maintaining high-quality education for them.
- While the overall impact of teaching, learning and assessment leads to good progress, the effectiveness of direct teaching in lesson time, and especially planning to meet the needs of different ability groups, is variable. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated through a combination of robust performance management and training.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that the best pedagogy and, in particular, effective practice in meeting the needs of different ability groups are spread more widely and more consistently across the school.
- Make use of the training associated with national standards to develop the skills of leaders at all levels.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal has galvanised staff, pupils, parents and the local community to support the school's rapid improvement under his leadership. For example, a parent told inspectors that 'this school is now the school that everyone is talking about and considering moving their children here.' Staff are unanimously positive about the current leadership and management of the school.
- Leaders of the MAT and the headteacher have a vision for the school which staff share. There is a clear culture of hard work and good behaviour throughout the school. Leaders of the MAT and of the school have a firm understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. For example, during joint observations with inspectors, leaders were accurate in their analysis of strengths and areas for development. School leaders are ambitious for further improvement.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching in the school. They have used performance management robustly to hold teachers accountable for meeting national teaching standards. Teachers are helped to improve through regular professional development and opportunities to work with colleagues from other schools inside and outside the MAT. There are clear expectations which teachers understand and implement.
- Last year, staff changes restricted the delivery of a full curriculum, especially at key stage 3. This has now been resolved and the curriculum is broad and balanced. An example of leaders' commitment to providing a wide range of opportunities is that although very small numbers chose music GCSE in Year 10, leaders have maintained the class. Further breadth is provided through courses such as philosophy and ethics and the level two examination course in finance. Opportunities exist for all pupils to receive personal, health, social and economic (PHSE) education and religious education (RE), but leaders are aware of the need to review and improve the impact of this provision. Parents are pleased with the curriculum provided. For example, one told inspectors, 'My son has just started this school but is thoroughly enjoying it. Wide range of lessons, after-school clubs etc.'
- There are good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, a history lesson on the slave trade raised pupils' awareness of modern-day slavery. The teacher encouraged pupils to reflect on how different sources made them feel. Assemblies and form time encourage pupils' appreciation of fundamental British values. Pupils have a good understanding of extremism, demonstrated, for example, through a form-time discussion about 'Does hate ever bring anything good?'
- Leaders have carefully analysed the spending and impact of additional funding through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. Money has been used effectively to fund projects which directly benefit pupils. Less successful approaches have been discontinued and replaced.
- Similarly, funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively. As a result, these pupils are well supported and flourish.

- Very nearly all parents responding to Ofsted’s online questionnaire were complimentary about the school’s communication, although a couple disagreed. A typical comment to inspectors was ‘This school is improving all the time. Any issues I have ever had have been dealt with quickly.’ The theme of improvement was common to many parental comments. This particular parent went on to tell inspectors how a pupil poured praise on the principal, with “Mr Wilson is actually all right ... I like him.” Which is definitely not what he would usually say.’
- Staff responding to Ofsted’s online questionnaire were universally positive. They unanimously agree that the school is a lot better than when the predecessor school was inspected and unanimously strongly agree that they are proud to work at the school. Unusually, they all agree that the school is well led and managed. Most staff agree that leaders and managers take workload into account when developing and implementing policies and procedures so as to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on staff, for example stating that ‘there is a good communication and relationships between the managers and staff on this issue.’
- The level of support given by the MAT has been instrumental in enabling the school to move forward. The key has been in quickly identifying the problems and then seeking out and appointing a principal who has so successfully driven change. As the needs of the school have changed, the MAT has adapted the nature of its support to focus on quality assurance and ensuring rigour and challenge, for example through regular reviews and monitoring processes. MAT leaders are a regular and visible presence around the school.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is undertaken by the MAT.
- The principal says that he feels more accountable than he has ever done.
- The MAT leaders responsible for governance have a wealth of experience and expertise around education and welfare which enhances the school.
- The MAT leaders responsible for governance regularly visit the school and hold leaders to account for the quality of education, pupil welfare and safeguarding. They know the strengths, weaknesses and challenges of the school well and provide effective challenge and support through regular board meetings.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Rigorous systems are in place. School policies and procedures are implemented well and checked by a representative of the MAT.
- All staff have received appropriate training on keeping pupils safe. Staff know what to look out for and how to raise concerns.
- Pupils, staff and parents are very positive about pupils’ safety and well-being. The culture of the school is one where pupils and families are known well by staff. Pupils are well cared for and cared about.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The overall impact of teaching, learning and assessment is very effective because there is a lot of additional support provided outside normal lesson time. Pupils really appreciate and benefit from this.
- In the best lessons, work is adapted to meet the different abilities of pupils. In these lessons pupils make rapid progress. Demonstrating this, very effective teaching was seen in, for example, physical education (PE), history and French.
- Positive relationships were evident in all lessons seen by inspectors. Pupils confirm that this is typical. This creates an excellent climate for learning, with all pupils engaged in their work. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils are clear about what is expected of them and comply with requests from staff very quickly.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge which adds authority to their teaching and gives pupils confidence.
- Teachers help pupils to understand how to improve their work. Feedback over time provides pupils with clear next steps for improvement, which enables them to make progress. The school's assessment policy is used consistently and has a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Teachers and leaders analyse the strengths and weaknesses of teaching accurately. They have used performance management effectively to raise the quality of teaching across the school. Pupils show pride in their work through exemplary presentation in their books.
- In the best lessons, the levels of pupil engagement are high because of the teacher's effective planning and delivery. When some lessons are pitched at the middle of the ability range, the progress of pupils is inconsistent as pupils with low prior attainment fall behind and the most able pupils are insufficiently challenged.
- While teachers' questioning is often effective, some teachers do not adapt their explanations, their questioning and the work set to provide appropriate challenge to pupils of different ability levels.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Following a hiatus, when leaders were not focused on this area, enthusiastic and passionate careers provision is now developing well. In Year 10, all pupils have the opportunity to experience the world of work. For pupils who choose or are guided onto the finance course, coherent provision for financial education is helped by an external examination. Guidance for pupils in making appropriate subject choices has improved. All pupils leaving Year 11 go into employment, education or training. However, leaders recognise that the school's provision to fulfil its statutory duties for careers information, advice and guidance, while developing well, is behind where it should be.
- The school monitors the progress and welfare of all its pupils, especially those entitled

to pupil premium funding and children looked after. Bullying is rare and pupils, staff and parents are confident that it would be effectively and quickly sorted out should it occur. Pupils are well cared for and feel safe. Parents agree. As one told inspectors, 'My youngest, in Year 10, has a statement of special needs, and is well taught and supported with all aspects of school, both pastoral care and educational support ... already I have been in talks ... as to how best to support in the transition to GCSE and beyond.'

- Pupils are great ambassadors for the school. They take pride in their work and in their appearance. They are smart in their uniforms.
- Leaders recognise that pupils' personal development is insufficiently developed in some lessons because they are over-reliant on being given direction by their teachers.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils work very well together and are enthusiastic in lessons. They respond quickly and positively to teachers. Any low-level disruption is rare.
- Before and after school and at break and lunchtimes pupils get on well together. Their conduct is exemplary. They are polite and welcoming to visitors and engage courteously in conversation, often instigating it.
- Exclusions are now rare and much reduced through the introduction of the internal exclusion room. Pupils sent to this area engage in productive use of time.
- There have been very robust structures to improve attendance put in place over the last 18 months. These are implemented with consistency. They involve the use of warning notices, but there has also been a big emphasis on celebrating good attendance. Effective use is made of the MAT's educational welfare officer. Regular reports go to the MAT board. These strategies have combined to improve attendance for all groups so that attendance is at least as good as other schools nationally.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Overall attainment has risen sharply. In 2016, the proportion of pupils gaining five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics rose dramatically from 38% to 64%. In 2017, results cannot be directly compared due to examination changes, but the school's information shows similar improvements.
- In 2017, the school's information indicates that the progress of Year 11 pupils is likely to have been at least as positive as in 2016, when progress was as good as other schools nationally.
- Differences in outcomes between subjects have been reduced since 2016 through leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching. In the school's initial stages of improvement there was a focus on raising attainment in English and mathematics. This focus has now spread to other subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively and do well as a result. The leader for this area has a clear vision for pupils' inclusion.

For example, she has been instrumental in reshaping the support provided by teaching assistants so that pupils develop greater independence. Resources in lessons are often tailored to meet the individual needs of pupils. The schools monitoring information suggests that these pupils make better than average progress, often from very low starting points.

- Pupils entitled to pupil premium funding make progress that is not quite as good as that of other pupils nationally, but which is improving strongly. Leaders plan and evaluate the use of this additional funding well.
- The most able pupils, including the most able pupils entitled to the pupil premium, achieve well.
- In a few lessons, pupils with low prior attainment, but who do not have special educational needs, do not make progress because teachers move on without checking their understanding.

### **16 to 19 study programmes**

**Good**

- Leaders have recognised that given the size of the main school, a traditional sixth form is not viable. They have explored other opportunities for providing post-16 education in the local area. They are working in partnership with a local further education college to establish new vocational provision to serve the needs of the community and local economy. This is in the process of being established and is eagerly anticipated by some Year 11 pupils. In the meantime, a small group of three students are completing their A-level studies at the school in Year 13.
- The school is carefully ensuring that these students get the best provision possible. Historical data shows that students do well and make good progress on academic A-level courses at the school. The three students are all following individualised programmes leading to academic A levels.
- The three students are looked after by a committed teacher. They spend their days in school attending lessons or doing monitored independent research. In lessons, the group sizes range from one to three and so teaching is very well targeted at their needs, with lots of individualised feedback. As a result, all the students are making good progress.
- During the inspection, students were being helped to complete their applications for different universities. They all have appropriately high aspirations.

## School details

Unique reference number	141236
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10036108

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	396
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	3
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
MAT chief operating officer	Mary McKeeman
Principal	Michael Wilson
Telephone number	01728 830570
Website	<a href="http://www.aldevalleyacademy.org.uk/">www.aldevalleyacademy.org.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@aldevalley.suffolk.sch.uk">enquiries@aldevalley.suffolk.sch.uk</a>
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.
- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The school is part of the Bright Tribe MAT.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement.



- The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted inspectors over two days.
- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence from lesson observations, some carried out with the headteacher or lead practitioner; short visits to lessons; discussions with pupils and staff; meetings with staff, directors and the chief operating officer of the MAT and the MAT's director of secondary education; reviews of pupils' work in books; reviews of the school's website, documents and assessment information; and general observations of the daily operations of the school, including social areas.
- Inspectors analysed the 32 standard responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, alongside the 16 free-text responses to the same questionnaire. One pupil survey response was received and 27 questionnaires from staff.

## Inspection team

Adrian Lyons, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Diana Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector
Rob James	Ofsted Inspector

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