

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Giles Caldwell
Headteacher
Alder Brook
Walnut Road
Winton
Salford
Lancashire
M30 8LE

Dear Mr Caldwell

Short inspection of Alder Brook

Following my visit to the school on 26 June 2019 with Linda Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You lead a warm, caring and welcoming school. You and your leadership team are passionate about striving to improve outcomes for the pupils in your school. Pupils' best interests are at the heart of everything that you do. You lead by example to ensure that staff are highly ambitious for pupils.

You have a clear vision for your school – that pupils will make good academic progress. You believe strongly that despite having had negative experiences of education, each pupil can make up missed learning and achieve their academic potential. Pupils respond positively to this approach. A comment from a pupil typifies this: 'It's great here, teachers really help you – I can do fractions now.' The work in pupils' books is of high quality and demonstrates that teachers have high expectations for all pupils.

Staff are proud to work at your school. Staff development is a major priority of the school and is central to its success. Pupil numbers have increased significantly since the last inspection. Some pupils now remain at the school until the end of year 6. Staff have developed their skills to cater for the needs of these pupils. As a result, all pupils make good progress.

The local authority values the work of your school. The school's outreach team has had a very positive impact on reducing permanent exclusions in primary schools across the borough. The local authority representative described Alder Brook as a 'key part of the local authority's special educational needs strategy'.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to develop the skills of teaching assistants. You have addressed this successfully. Training for teaching assistants has improved their understanding of planning and assessment. Improved recruitment procedures ensure that new teaching assistants have the skills needed to strengthen the support team in school.

Teaching assistants are now fully involved in planning lessons with teachers. This enables them to have a clearer understanding of the expectations for each pupil. As a result, their support is more effective and pupils make good progress.

Teaching assistants are also more closely involved in the assessment of pupils. This has helped to develop teaching assistants' understanding of the impact of their support. Teaching assistants play a key role in developing pupils' language skills in particular.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures are thorough and fit for purpose. You carry out checks to ensure that staff and governors are suitable to work with vulnerable pupils. Leaders maintain high-quality, detailed records of these checks.

You have created a distinctive ethos within the school. You have secured an exceptional commitment from staff to meet the needs of pupils and their families. As such, there is a strong, vigilant culture within the school. Staff routinely report the slightest concerns that they may have about a pupil. Leaders are able to analyse and address any emerging trends in pupils' behaviour. Staff receive effective safeguarding training to keep them up to date with the most recent statutory guidance.

Inspection findings

- I wanted to find out how well the curriculum meets the needs of pupils. Pupils are assessed carefully on arrival for their academic ability and for any additional needs that they may have. An individualised curriculum is carefully designed to remove barriers to learning. This develops pupils' skills and fills in any missed learning. There is a strong emphasis on the development of reading, writing and mathematics. As a result of having their individual needs met, pupils make good progress.
- I also wanted to investigate how well prepared pupils are for moving to other schools. Transitions to other schools are carefully managed. Those pupils who return to their original school maintain close contact while at Alder Brook. This ensures that they do not lose touch with their school. Their curriculum is matched to that of their home school. For pupils moving on to a new school, their transition is carefully planned. Pupils are able to build relationships with staff at their new school. This helps to make the move to a new school as smooth as possible. The primary outreach team plays an

important role in establishing these relationships. The primary outreach team does not currently support pupils' transition to secondary schools.

- I was interested to know whether governors are effective at holding leaders to account. Governors know the school well. They were able to clearly describe the ethos of the school. Governors have a thorough understanding of the work of the school and identified its strengths accurately. This clear understanding of the school enables governors to hold leaders to account by asking challenging questions of them. For example, when you had the chance to support another school, governors sought reassurance that this would not have an adverse effect on Alder Brook.
- Governors were also able to describe how the school needs to develop further. They were able to describe the effectiveness of the outreach work with other primary schools. They also explained that there is still work to be done to support pupils who leave Alder Brook at the end of year 6 to move on to a secondary school.
- At the time of the last inspection, it was recognised that the school was rapidly improving. Since then, there has been further improvement in the quality of education. Staff are highly reflective about their practice. This has created an environment where pursuit of excellence is the norm.
- High-quality teaching supports pupils to make good progress. The curriculum equips pupils very effectively to re-engage in mainstream education. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. Behaviour in school is excellent.
- The local authority has recognised the high quality of education provided by Alder Brook. There are now 16 places for pupils to remain at the school until the end of year 6. These pupils continue to make good progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the highly effective outreach work with primary schools is extended to support pupil transition into secondary education.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Salford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Burgess
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and other leaders. An inspector also met with four members of the management committee, a representative of the local authority and your school improvement partner.

Inspectors met formally with a group of pupils and spoke with pupils informally at social times.

Leaders accompanied inspectors on visits to classrooms, where they observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects. They also looked at pupils' work across the school.

Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. They also scrutinised a range of policies, and leaders' school improvement plan and self-evaluation. Inspectors also checked on the school's website.

Inspectors took account of 17 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. There was one positive response to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.