

Inspection of a good school: Alderwood Academy

Raeburn Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 0EW

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 February 2022

Outcome

Alderwood Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Alderwood is a calm and friendly environment. Pupils often arrive at school with previously negative experiences of education. They settle quickly. Pupils appreciate the way that adults care for them and understand their individual needs well. Pupils re-engage with learning and build their self-esteem as a result. One parent echoed the positive view of others as they said, 'They have surpassed my expectations and it has been the best thing, education wise. I can't speak highly enough of the school and its staff'.

Pupils learn to work hard. There are clear boundaries and expectations for pupils to follow adults' guidance and instructions. Pupils happily follow these. Adults find the things that pupils find interesting to learn. Pupils told inspectors that their favourite subjects included art, science and spelling.

Pupils understand how they should behave towards one another. If pupils become upset, staff skilfully work alongside them to provide reassurance. Pupils know that they can trust adults. They feel safe because adults listen to any concerns that they may have.

Riding scooters and playing football are some of the activities that pupils enjoy. Pupils can earn additional rewards by showing positive attitudes through the school day.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

School staff and trust leaders have a well-considered programme for the teaching of reading. It is based upon consistent approaches to ensure that reading is at the heart of their overall curriculum approach.

Teachers take time to check how well each pupil reads when they begin at the school. Pupils at the earliest stages of reading learn phonics to help them become better readers. Staff are well trained. They know how to model and teach phonics well. Pupils use their

knowledge of phonics to tackle unfamiliar words. Books are well matched ensuring that pupils are developing reading fluency and confidence.

Pupils develop a love of reading through high-quality books. Texts often reflect pupils' own experiences and interests. This makes an effective contribution to promoting positive learning attitudes. Pupils enjoy reading regularly, choosing books from the library.

Leaders have recently introduced 'pathways' as a new approach to their curriculum design. However, leaders have not carried out an in-depth evaluation of the impact of their new approach on helping pupils achieve even more. They do not have a full understanding of the refinements that need to be made to their curriculum plans.

Staff check and identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge when they arrive. Staff use this information well to adapt what is taught so that they meet the needs of pupils effectively. However, leaders are not clear about what further training some staff may require so that all aspects of leaders' chosen curriculum approaches are delivered equally well.

Teachers teach the curriculum well. They break down information into small steps so that they regularly revisit what pupils already know and understand. Teachers follow consistent approaches that are effective in building pupils' new knowledge and understanding over time. Pupils are familiar with these approaches. Pupils gain a sense of security so that learning becomes a positive experience.

Staff are alert to how pupils are feeling. They encourage and reward pupils' positive behaviour. If pupils need help to regulate their own behaviour, then staff act quickly. They work sensitively and calmly to refocus pupils. There is a productive use of learning time.

Leaders provide a rich provision to support pupils' personal development. Staff ensure that there is a nurturing environment which builds pupils' confidence and resilience. Pupils learn about how to stay healthy and be safe. Leaders reinforce key messages and celebrate pupils' positive behaviour choices in assemblies. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders build strong relationships with local schools to help pupils successfully reintegrate into a mainstream setting.

Staff are highly supportive of the school. They consider that they are all part of a team, fostering a collaborative approach. Staff value the support they receive from leaders. They appreciate leaders' 'open door' policy to share their ideas or concerns.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that the ways leaders have monitored and evaluated their curriculum may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils say they feel safe and are safe. Staff are knowledgeable about the different ways pupils can be at risk of harm. Staff act quickly to report their concerns. Leaders take appropriate action. They act tenaciously to follow up concerns and work with external services when needed. This means that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support they need.

Trust leaders make checks of the schools' safeguarding policies and procedures. They ensure that all those employed by the school are safe to work with pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders, including the trust, have not fully monitored and evaluated the impact of their planned curriculum. This means that leaders are not secure about the impact of their new approaches to the curriculum working, nor how well pupils remember important information over time. Leaders should ensure that they check and evaluate the effectiveness of the whole curriculum. They should provide staff with any further training and support to implement leaders' intentions effectively across all subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Alderwood, to be good in November 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	144879
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10212041
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	8 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Whittaker
Headteacher	Tom Baker
Website	www.raedwaldtrust.org
Date of previous inspection	5 October 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Alderwood Academy is part of the Raedwald Multi-Academy Trust. It joined the trust in September 2017.
- The headteacher was appointed to the post in September 2020.
- The school runs a breakfast club for all its pupils.
- At the time of this inspection, the school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- Places at the school are currently commissioned for pupils in key stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- During the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and personal social, economic and health education. In these subjects, they visited lessons,

looked at pupils' work, scrutinised leaders plans and talked with pupils and staff about the way these subjects were taught.

- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, teachers and support staff. They also held a meeting with the trust including the chief executive officer and the chair of trustees. Inspectors also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed school improvement plans, summary evaluation and documents related to safeguarding.
- There were insufficient responses made on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, for inspectors to consider. Inspectors received one free text. Inspectors spoke to parents informally. Inspectors took account of seven responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Mitcheson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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