

Inspection of Aspire Ap School

Hall Green Baptist Church, 1250 Stratford Road, Birmingham, West Midlands B28 9EJ

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 May 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Staff at Aspire Ap School help pupils come into school and enjoy learning. Pupils soon find out that they can trust staff to listen to them. Teachers give them clear, fair and simple rules to follow so that they can concentrate and enjoy their lessons.

Pupils say there is always someone to talk to if they have a problem. They enjoy cooking or baking every Tuesday. Lunchtimes are special because adults and pupils help the headteacher to get the meal ready. They all eat together like a family. Pupils do their best to stick to the rules because they respect the staff. If there are problems, staff step in quickly to sort them out. Pupils are not worried about bullying. They feel secure and safe in class and at social times. They know that staff will not tolerate poor behaviour.

Staff provide pupils with many opportunities to discuss their learning. Teachers encourage pupils to think about ideas and make suggestions. They give them interesting problems to work out. Whatever their starting points, staff make sure that work is pitched at the right level. They give pupils lots of praise and help them to develop their knowledge and understanding across the curriculum.

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

Leaders recognise that most pupils who attend this school have missed education in the past and have gaps in their knowledge and skills. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Therefore, leaders have put in place an inclusive curriculum that focuses on the key skills of reading, writing and mathematics.

The curriculum is well planned and sequenced. Teachers use appropriate assessments to find out what pupils know and can do. Teachers then map out the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn over time. Teachers have the appropriate knowledge for the subjects that they teach. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next stage in education or training.

There are occasions when teachers do not give pupils enough time or opportunity to consolidate their learning fully. As a result, pupils do not have a secure knowledge and understanding in all areas of the curriculum and make slower progress.

A variety of high-quality texts support pupils' thinking skills, understanding of issues and vocabulary development. Pupils say that their confidence to express ideas has improved greatly since joining the school. The school has appropriate resources that they use to support any pupils who need help with their reading.

Staff are skilled in supporting pupils with their emotional and behavioural needs. Over time, pupils gain trust in the staff. In this caring atmosphere, pupils are motivated to learn. All pupils have improved their attendance since starting at the school.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn how to become responsible, active citizens. For example, pupils have supported people in Ukraine by putting together food hampers. They write poems for primary school children that include themes to do with 'loving your neighbour', racism and unity. In this way, leaders prepare pupils well for the future.

Pupils are involved in a national programme, 'votes for schools'. Pupils discuss their views confidently and vote about what should be done about news items. As a result, they develop their persuasion abilities and understanding of democracy.

Leaders invite people of different faiths to come into school to discuss their beliefs with pupils. These visits deepen pupils' knowledge of diverse communities and further their understanding of religious differences. Other visitors to the school have included representatives from charities, social workers, members of the youth offending team and nurses. These visitors contribute to pupils' knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils enjoy visits, for example to Cadbury World, Dudley Zoo or Barns Close, to widen their knowledge of the curriculum.

Teachers ensure that pupils understand the concept of building character. They teach them how to be resilient when things are difficult. Pupils learn to talk through setbacks with someone they can trust.

Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles effectively. They have valuable lessons in relationships and sex education and health education. Parents and carers were fully consulted about the school's sex education policy when leaders asked them to give their views. Teachers skilfully enable pupils to talk and explore the concept of consent.

Leaders are developing an effective careers programme to prepare pupils for the world of work. Pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 complete work experience and value the opportunity to have first-hand experience of the workplace. All previous pupils gained qualifications in mathematics and English and went on to further education.

Leaders have ensured that all independent school standards are met. The headteacher and members of the proprietor body are dedicated to improving the lives of the pupils in their care. They ensure that rigorous systems are in place and know their statutory duties well. The proprietor body arranged a quality assurance visit to benefit from an outside view of the education the school provides.

The headteacher regularly monitors the quality of education so that she knows what needs to improve. She has created a strong teaching team over time. However, she is the only senior leader on the staff and occasionally, this is overburdening. Governors encourage and support teachers to develop their skills. Teachers welcome the support leaders provide for their well-being and workload. Parents appreciate the difference the school is making for their children's life chances. Staff work well with other agencies to improve the lives of the pupils and their families.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are alert to any indication that pupils may be at risk of harm. Staff are clear about what to do if they are worried about a pupil. They act quickly to report concerns. Leaders follow these up swiftly. They ensure that all work placements are safe for pupils. Leaders ensure that the staff they employ are safe to work with children. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations and online. The safeguarding policy meets current government guidance and is displayed on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Teachers do not always provide enough time or planned opportunities for pupils to revisit learning and improve the knowledge and skills that they need. This means that some pupils' skills do not develop securely. Leaders must ensure that teachers provide sufficient time for pupils to consolidate their learning and practise skills in a timely way.
- The only leader in the school is the headteacher. This makes it difficult for the school to drive forward and develop further. Governors should look to build leadership capacity so that the day-to-day leadership and management of the school are strengthened.

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

School details

Unique reference number	139962
DfE registration number	330/6015
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10220430
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part-time pupils	9
Proprietor	Ecclesia International Church
Chair	Mike Royal
Headteacher	Vivienne Royal
Fees (day pupils)	£115 per day
Telephone number	0121 243 5054
Website	www.aspireapschool.org/
Email address	vroyal@aspireapschool.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 to 15 February 2018

Information about this school

- Aspire Ap School is an independent day school providing education for pupils with behavioural difficulties or social, emotional and mental health difficulties. These pupils have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from their mainstream schools.
- The school's mission and values are based on Christian principles. It aims to tackle the issues that underpin behavioural difficulties and to develop learning skills, leading to qualifications and reintegration into schools, further education or employment.
- Since the last inspection in February 2018, the school has changed its name from TLG to Aspire Ap School.
- The school moved to new premises in September 2019 and is now based at Hall Green Baptist Church.
- The proprietor of the school has changed. The proprietor is now Ecclesia International Church.
- There is a new chair of the management committee, who is also the proprietor's representative.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2020.
- All pupils who attend the school are dual registered with their base school. They attend Aspire Ap four days per week. Their base schools are responsible for their education on the day that they do not attend Aspire Ap School.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, as well as with all the teachers and teaching assistants. The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the proprietor body, the governor responsible for safeguarding and the director of the company that oversees work experience for the pupils.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, religious education and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, this included discussions about the curriculum with subject leaders, visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. The lead inspector also met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects and talked about the books they were reading.
- The lead inspector talked to pupils more generally about their experiences in school. She observed pupils at breaktimes and saw them at work in a range of lessons. She joined the school for lunch on day two of the inspection.
- The lead inspector took account of the parents who made free-text responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey. Each inspector also spoke to one parent about their views of the school. The lead inspector took account of Ofsted's pupil survey of views and Ofsted's staff survey of views.
- Inspectors talked with staff to discuss how they are supported to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding and to discuss their workload.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including school policies, curriculum documents and the school website.
- In checking safeguarding, the inspector scrutinised documentation and looked at the school processes for reporting concerns and the checks that leaders make on staff prior to employment. They spoke to staff about their knowledge of safeguarding.
- Checks were made relating to the independent school standards, including checks of the school's premises.

Inspection team

Mary Maybank, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Susan Hickerton

Ofsted Inspector

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