

Inspection of Solihull Alternative Provision Academy

Cranmore Avenue, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands B90 4LE

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff want the very best for every pupil at this inclusive and caring school. They get to know each pupil quickly and listen to their views. Staff work alongside pupils to set them on a pathway that supports their needs and raises their aspirations. Leaders' vision that every pupil will successfully take their next step beyond school is shared by all.

Pupils come to school happily and trust staff to keep them safe. Staff model care, tolerance and respect. For many pupils, this means they attend school more regularly than before. Staff are alert to any incidents of bullying and report issues promptly so that they can be resolved.

Pupils can often display complex and challenging behaviour. Nevertheless, leaders and staff have crafted an orderly and calm environment. Staff work hard to build purposeful and positive relationships with pupils. They use these relationships as a lever to draw pupils back into education and help them make positive changes. Staff never give up on pupils and pupils know this. Staff persevere and welcome all pupils into school every morning. One parent summed this up, saying 'this is the only school my child wants to actually go to, he feels heard, respected and understood'.

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

The headteacher leads with passion and drive. Trustees, leaders and staff are rightly proud of their school. Leaders prioritise staff well-being and support them to improve. Leaders are not complacent. They know there is still work to be done to fully realise their vision. Trustees and leaders continue to develop the school. They have extended the scope of the school to meet the specific needs of different groups of pupils. For instance, opening the Mercury Centre for pupils with an education, health and care plan for pupils struggling with the demands of education. This breadth and depth means that staff are well placed to meet the needs of the pupils they serve.

Leaders have constructed an effective curriculum. This blends academic and vocational qualifications into an individual pathway for each pupil. Leaders assess pupils to help tailor this pathway and to understand pupils' starting points. They align this with pupils' hopes, interests and ambitions. To facilitate this, leaders use one of three alternative providers. This helps to ensure that pupils are well placed for their next steps in education, employment or training, for example by providing pupils with experience in a career path that interests them.

Most pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For many pupils, this relates to their social, emotional and mental health. Leaders assess these needs accurately. They then plan, share, implement and review strategies to support pupils. However, the identification of pupils' speech, language and communication needs is less robust. This means that these needs are not addressed as well as they could be.

In subjects, leaders have considered the order in which pupils should learn new skills and knowledge. Leaders have supported teachers with training on how to teach the curriculum. Consequently, teachers give due care and attention to how they will explain new content and help pupils to learn. However, some teachers are not sufficiently alert to the impact of pupils' chequered experience of education. This is because training has not unpicked the challenges and pitfalls of learning in each subject. As a result, some teachers do not identify when they need to adapt or revisit pupils' previous learning. This means that pupils do not always build on what they already know.

Leaders have prioritised reading. They have introduced a plethora of initiatives to encourage pupils to read. However, this work has not yet been tied together in a cohesive strategy. This is especially the case for pupils with weak phonics knowledge. Leaders do use assessment to identify the pupils that need extra help. However, they have not developed the wider staff expertise and carefully matched support that will help some pupils improve to become fluent and confident readers.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is strong. Pupils learn and develop the knowledge and skills to be good citizens. Teachers use 'circle time' well to discuss and explore an array of issues with pupils to help build character, self-confidence and self-esteem. Leaders provide a broad range of opportunities to nurture pupils' interests and broaden their horizons. Many pupils join in and take part. Pupils benefit from a comprehensive careers education. They learn about the world of work and are supported as they move beyond school. Leaders have a robust package for pupils when they leave, to support their transition to college or training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have made sure that safeguarding permeates through every aspect of school life. They have put together a comprehensive training package for staff to constantly review and extend their knowledge of the challenges pupils face outside school. Staff report any concern, no matter how trivial it may seem. Leaders then use this information to swiftly identify any pupil that may be risk of harm. They follow this up tenaciously so that pupils and families get the help they need. Leaders work closely with other agencies, tapping into expertise, to make sure that no pupil slips through the net.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not developed a cohesive package to help pupils at different stages of reading. As a result, leaders' interventions and approaches do not always provide pupils with the individualised support they need. Leaders should ensure that appropriate phonics programmes are in place, and wider strategies to

develop pupils' fluency and love of reading are targeted, monitored and evaluated effectively.

- Leaders' systems for identifying pupils with speech, language and communication needs are not robust enough. This means that teachers are unable to provide pupils with precise support so that they can learn well. Leaders should ensure that they carefully identify pupils with a specific learning need in this area. Leaders should use this information to plan, develop and share strategies with teachers so that all pupils get the help they need.
- Leaders have not ensured that all teachers know how to best teach their subject. Consequently, some teachers teach the planned curriculum without considering how they will adapt lessons to respond to emerging gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders should ensure that all teachers develop their understanding of how to best teach their subject so that they are alert to pupils' missing knowledge and adapt the curriculum accordingly.

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.

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	143918
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10241490
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Colin Winstone
Headteacher	Kat Dockery
Website	www.sa.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Solihull Alternative Provision Academy opened in April 2018 and is part of Solihull Alternative Provision Multi Academy Trust. The trust contains two schools.
- The academy admits pupils in key stages 3 and 4 who have been excluded, are at risk of permanent exclusion or who have become disengaged from learning. Many pupils have experienced disruption to their education or have refused to attend school in the past. The school operates on two sites.
- All pupils have specific needs associated with past schooling or personal circumstances. Most have social, emotional or mental health needs. Most pupils have SEND. Some pupils have an education, health and care plan or are about to obtain one.
- Some pupils attend Solihull Alternative Provision Academy on a short-term programme, while others complete key stage 4 at the academy.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers to provide a range of vocational qualifications for pupils. Pupils typically attend these providers for one day each week, accompanied by staff from the academy.

- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the executive headteacher, headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and those responsible for careers education.
- Inspectors held discussions with members of the board of trustees and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, humanities, mathematics and PSHE. For each of these subjects, inspectors met with subject leaders, carried out visits to lessons, spoke to pupils and looked at some of their work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculums for physical education and science and visited additional lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's extra-curricular activities with leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to a staff survey, as well as Ofsted Parent View.
- An inspector spent time talking to leaders at the three external alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding leader.

Inspection team

Ian Tustian, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Dawn White	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Pollitt	His Majesty's Inspector

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