

Inspection of Alsager School

Hassall Road, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, Cheshire ST7 2HR

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, are happy and safe at this school. They forge strong relationships with staff and with other pupils. Pupils explained that they like and respect each other, regardless of any differences that they may have.

Pupils and students rise to the high expectations that staff have for their behaviour. As a result, they typically behave well in lessons and around the school site. Staff deal swiftly with any incidents of poor behaviour.

Leaders deal effectively with bullying. However, there remains a small number of pupils, and parents and carers, who worry about the impact of bullying. Leaders are working well to address this issue.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' achievement. Teachers support pupils, and students, to learn effectively in almost all subjects. Adults help pupils to remember more of their learning as they move through school. Overall, pupils and students achieve well.

Pupils value, and benefit from, a wide range of extra-curricular activities. For example, the debating club is a popular place for pupils to discuss a wide range of local, national and international topics. Pupils also enjoy the rainbows group, where they discuss issues of equality and prejudice. Students in the sixth form have a well-designed enrichment programme.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is broad and ambitious for all pupils, including for students in the sixth form. They have ensured that the curriculum is relevant and engaging. Leaders have increased the proportion of pupils who take a modern foreign language at GCSE. Consequently, more pupils now study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

Leaders have continued to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. In almost all subjects, leaders have identified the knowledge that they want pupils and students to learn. However, in one or two subjects at key stages 3 and 4, the curriculum is still being developed. In these subjects, on occasions, some pupils do not gain the depth of knowledge that they could. As a result, a few pupils have gaps in their knowledge and sometimes find it difficult to remember all that they should.

In the main, teachers deliver the curriculum well, including in the sixth form. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They present learning clearly to pupils. Teachers plan regular opportunities for pupils and students to recall what they have learned in previous lessons. Students in the sixth form are well prepared for the next steps in their education, employment or training.

In most subjects, teachers use leaders' assessment strategies well. They identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and quickly address any misconceptions. Where teachers do this well, pupils know more and remember more of the curriculum. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders accurately identify, assess and support pupils with SEND. They make sure that teachers and staff are well informed about how to best meet pupils' additional needs. Pupils with SEND progress through the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. They learn well. This includes students with SEND in the sixth form.

Leaders give reading a high priority across the school. For the small group of pupils who have difficulty with reading, leaders quickly identify their additional needs. Leaders provide a comprehensive reading support programme to help pupils to catch up quickly with their peers. This helps these pupils to access the full curriculum.

Pupils typically engage well in lessons. They attend school regularly and are punctual to lessons. Pupils move purposely and safely through the school to arrive at their lessons on time. Lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

Leaders have developed a well-designed programme to promote all aspects of pupils' wider personal development. This is delivered in a dedicated 'SPIRIT' lesson each week. In these lessons, pupils are given opportunities to discuss tolerance, respect and the rule of law. They talk about healthy relationships. Pupils explore careers education. Leaders provide form tutors with support packs to deliver the curriculum. However, leaders have not identified the specific knowledge that pupils need to learn. This hinders how well pupils remember some important topics.

The newly formed Cornovii Trust's board of trustees has strong oversight of the quality of education that pupils receive. Board members bring a variety of skills and talents to the role. They, along with governors, are ensuring that leaders are held fully to account for pupils' learning experiences at the school.

Staff are extremely supportive of the leadership of the school. They are proud to work here. They told inspectors that leaders carefully consider their workload and well-being. They said that they feel valued and supported in their role.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide staff with high-quality safeguarding training. Staff confidently and competently identify pupils and students who may be at risk of harm.

Leaders' systems for reporting concerns are appropriate. They ensure that timely actions are put into place to help and support pupils and their families, when required. Leaders work in close partnership with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the support that they need.

Pupils learn how to keep safe outside school, including online. Most pupils are confident that there is someone to talk with if they have a concern.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a very small number of subjects, leaders are still developing the curriculum. In these subjects, pupils do not access the depth of learning that they could. They have some gaps in their learning as a result. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking in these remaining subjects.
- Leaders have not provided staff with the specific knowledge that pupils need to learn during the 'SPIRIT' personal development sessions. This hinders how well some pupils learn and remember important topics. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive appropriate and detailed information that equips them to deliver pupils' personal development consistently well.

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	140108
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10240563
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1579
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	319
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Janet Furber
Headteacher	Andrea O'Neill
Website	www.alsagerschool.org
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 September 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school trust has merged with another local trust. The new trust formed from the merger is called the Cornovii Trust. There is a new chair of the board of trustees.
- A number of pupils attend part-time alternative provision at two registered alternative providers, and a small number of pupils attend training at various local small businesses.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 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 second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken account of it in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other school leaders and a range of teaching and support staff. Inspectors also met with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the chair of the board of trustees and the chair of the governing body.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors conducted deep dives in English, mathematics, science, history, and art design and technology. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils and teachers. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the wider curriculum and looked at pupils' learning and their work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5. Inspectors also observed breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, the school development plans, leaders' self-evaluation documents and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding procedures. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements. An inspector also checked the arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Erica Sharman, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
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