

Inspection of a good school: Alde Valley Academy

Seaward Avenue, Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4BG

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 February 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe. They value welcoming areas such as the Oasis centre, where they can go as needed, at breaktime and lunchtime. Pupils treat each other with tolerance and respect as the school's 'CARE' values embed this in their everyday life. Leaders ensure that any bullying is quickly followed up and resolved.

Leaders have high ambitions for pupils, but these are not fully realised as pupils do not achieve well enough. Pupils get an inconsistent experience in how well the curriculum is taught. Pupils do not get enough useful guidance to ensure that they produce work of a high standard or learn important knowledge consistently well.

Pupils behave in a calm and orderly way. There are a few pupils whose behaviour sometimes disturbs learning. Staff deal with these incidents quickly, so disruption to pupils' learning is minimised.

Pupils relish the opportunities they get to perform to audiences, both at in-school events such as the Christmas concert and externally. They have a real sense of pride when they have their achievements celebrated at an annual awards event at Snape Maltings. Pupils enjoy taking part in a range of clubs and competitive sporting events.

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

Leaders have recently redesigned the curriculum effectively. They have ensured that the key knowledge pupils should learn, and the order in which it is taught, is suitably identified and planned in each subject.

Pupils experience a broad curriculum, but leaders are working to increase the academic ambition of this curriculum. Leaders have achieved initial success in this through

improving languages provision at key stage 3. Consequently, more pupils now choose languages as an option at key stage 4. The number of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate has increased, but still remains low. The EBacc is a set of subjects at GCSE that keeps pupils' options open for further study and future careers.

Pupils enjoy lessons where they have the opportunity to engage and explore learning. In music, they enthusiastically rehearse their part in samba performances. However, leaders have not ensured that the quality of teaching is consistent across the school. Some teachers do not check pupils' understanding carefully. They move on to new learning without giving pupils enough time to practise and retain key knowledge. Teachers do not always check well enough what pupils have learned. This means that pupils have some misconceptions that are not addressed effectively.

Leaders have not set high enough expectations about the standards of pupils' work. Some pupils have not achieved as well as they should. Teachers do not give pupils enough guidance about the quality of their work or ensure that pupils' work is of a high enough standard. However, leaders have started to address this.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs accurately identified. They receive the adaptations they need to access the curriculum, but experience the same inconsistencies in teaching as others.

Leaders have ensured there is a sharp focus on making sure those at the earlier stages of reading catch up. Pupils who need extra support with reading are quickly identified. They receive bespoke support that helps them to read with accuracy and understanding, so they can read more fluently.

Pupils' learning is rarely disrupted. Where disruption does occur, staff use the well understood behaviour system to quickly address it. Pupils benefit from high-quality pastoral support. Skilled staff support pupils well with wider needs such as mental health and well-being.

Pupils are tolerant and accepting of difference. They learn about this through a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Leaders have built strong relationships with local employers and use these to provide pupils with high-quality work experience. Leaders have enriched the curriculum with a range of trips and wider opportunities. These include working towards becoming an 'EcoSchool'.

Following the previous inspection, the quality of educational provision declined. The trust is working to effectively address this in a way that engages with staff, and is mindful of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained so they can identify potential safeguarding concerns effectively. Staff are clear about how and when to report concerns.

Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies such as social workers and the police to ensure that pupils get the support they need. Leaders keep clear and accurate records of their actions.

Leaders' checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work in school are thorough and accurately recorded.

Pupils are well informed about potential risks as they learn about these through PSHE. Leaders have established a culture where pupils are confident to talk about any worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not set clear expectations about the standards of work pupils should produce or ensured that teachers provide pupils with the guidance they need to produce work of a high standard. As a result, the quality of the work that pupils produce is of inconsistent quality. Leaders need to set clear expectations about the standards of work pupils are expected to produce and ensure that teachers provide pupils with the guidance they need to produce high-quality work.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is taught consistently well. Some teachers do not give pupils enough time to practise and embed their understanding of key knowledge. Pupils move on to new content before teachers have checked carefully what pupils know. As a result, some pupils do not retain key knowledge well enough or have misconceptions that are not addressed effectively. Leaders need to ensure that all staff teach the curriculum consistently well so that pupils retain and apply key knowledge well.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2017.

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	141236
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10255170
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	589
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steven Alderson
Headteacher	Daniel Mayhew
Website	www.aldevalley.suffolk.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined Waveney Valley Academies Trust in March 2019.
- The headteacher has been in post since June 2018.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, languages and music. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors conducted meetings with the trust chief executive officer, members of the local academy committee and leaders of provision for pupils with SEND, reading, behaviour and attendance, personal development, careers, PSHE and safeguarding.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- An inspector visited the Oasis SEND provision and spoke to pupils and staff.
- An inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher regarding use of alternative provision. An inspector spoke with providers and gathered samples of parents' and pupils' views.
- Inspectors explored the school's safeguarding culture through viewing safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and staff and talking to safeguarding leaders.
- Inspectors considered the 60 responses and 35 free-text responses made by parents to the survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered 41 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 146 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lynn Ayling

Ofsted Inspector

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