

Inspection of Avon Valley Academy

Recreation Road, Durrington, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 8HH

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

In recent years, several changes in senior leadership at this small school have had an unsettling effect. The current headteacher was appointed nine months ago. He has brought much-needed stability to the school. Pupils at Avon Valley Academy feel safe. They understand their school values of 'respect, determination and excellence'.

Pupils are beginning to benefit from an ambitious curriculum. However, this is not yet consistent. Sometimes the curriculum does not identify the core knowledge that pupils need to know. This means that pupils are often unable to remember the relevant learning from previous lessons.

Pupils understand how they should behave. Most pupils meet these expectations. However, some pupils still disrupt lessons. Staff do not always tackle behaviour consistently. This means that some derogatory language goes unchallenged. Pupils say that bullying sometimes happens, but it is dealt with effectively by staff. The majority of pupils are happy to attend Avon Valley Academy.

Pupils participate in an extensive careers programme. They value the extra opportunities they have linked to careers education. For example, pupils benefit from a range of external speakers and workplace activities. Pupils have access to extra-curricular clubs and activities. However, they feel the range of these extra-curricular opportunities is limited.

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

Senior leaders are ambitious for pupils. The new headteacher and executive headteacher are improving the curriculum so that expectations of what pupils can achieve are raised. They are developing plans to support subject leadership across the school. This is, in part, by establishing links with the other secondary schools in the trust. This work is in its infancy, and therefore the impact is not yet seen by pupils.

The curriculum is not yet implemented consistently in lessons. Some teachers lack subject knowledge. In addition, leaders have not set out the important knowledge for pupils to learn clearly. As a result, teachers do not always ensure that pupils have understood essential knowledge and sometimes pupils' misconceptions can go unnoticed. This hinders pupils' learning. They do not remember as much as they could.

Staff provide effective help for younger pupils who are in the early stages of reading. Pupils following the programme are reading with increasing fluency. They enjoy the books they are now able to read. Sometimes this is not as effective for older pupils. Leaders have plans to address this.

Leaders systematically identify strategies to support pupils with special educational

needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many staff use these strategies well. Pupils with SEND say this helps them to learn.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities in their personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons to debate and discuss issues. This encourages them to develop responsible and respectful attitudes. Leaders have established a well-planned PSHE curriculum that covers a broad range of issues. Staff teach pupils about the importance of mental health, physical health and about healthy relationships. Through an ethics curriculum, assemblies and other activities, staff promote pupils' moral understanding and develop their cultural awareness. Careers information, advice and guidance is well planned and sequenced.

While the elements of the PSHE programme are in place, leaders do not have effective oversight of pupils' experience. They do not monitor the impact sufficiently well. As a result, pupils report they are not always given the right information at the right time.

Pupils respect the school's leadership team. Pupils, parents and staff say there has been improvement in behaviour at the school over the last nine months. The vast majority of pupils comply with the school's expectations in lessons. However, several pupils show little enthusiasm for learning.

Leaders have made strenuous efforts to improve the rate of pupils' attendance, with some success. Even so, too many pupils regularly miss lessons. This hampers their learning and achievement.

Senior leaders and trustees know what needs to be done to improve the school. They are intent on converting the trust's vision into a practical reality in classrooms, but this is not consistently established. Leaders listen carefully to staff views. Staff recognise this. They believe that leaders take their welfare and well-being into account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff have safeguarding training to help them identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Trustees check that school leaders are taking appropriate action. This includes seeking external help for pupils that need it.

Leaders make the right checks when new staff join the school. They take effective action to keep pupils safe. Through the curriculum, pupils are taught about the risks they might face and how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not identified the sequence of core knowledge in all subjects. This means that the curriculum is not delivered consistently well. Pupils do not remember more over time. Leaders need to ensure that teachers consistently deliver a well-planned, sequential curriculum.
- Subject leadership is not sufficiently developed to improve teachers' subject knowledge in all areas. Teaching is not always adapted to take account of misconceptions. Leaders need to ensure that teachers have the expertise to deliver the curriculum as intended.
- Leaders' high expectations for behaviour are not consistently applied across the school. In both lessons and social times, there is some disruptive behaviour that goes unchallenged. Leaders must ensure that all staff insist on high expectations of behaviour for all pupils.
- The personal development programme is not sufficiently coherent. As a result, pupils do not have the support to fully prepare them for their next steps. Leaders need to ensure there is a clear overview of the progression in all aspects of personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

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	143005
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10246495
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	447
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Middleton
Headteacher	Jon Edy-Berry
Website	www.avonvalleyacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 and 5 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Acorn Education Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.

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.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and trust special

educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with representatives from the trust board.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with the designated safeguarding lead and the trust safeguarding leader to discuss the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. He considered the school's recruitment procedures, staff induction and training, records of concern and engagement with external agencies. The inspectors spoke with staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Parents also spoke to an inspector. Inspectors considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Gary Schlick, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lorraine Heath

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