

Inspection of Alsager Highfields Community Primary School

Fairview Avenue, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST7 2NW

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Alsager Highfields is a friendly and welcoming school. Relationships between adults, pupils and their families are positive. Leaders have created a nurturing environment, so pupils feel cared for, valued and safe. Pupils trust staff to help them with any worries that they may have.

Leaders have high expectations of, and aspirations for all pupils, based on the values of 'Nurture, achieve and believe'. Pupils have experiences that broaden their outlook on life, such as residential visits and visits to the theatre. Parents and carers are also encouraged to share these expectations, with one parent's comment being typical of many when they said, 'I am blown away with the communication and staff involvement with my child'.

Pupils behave well during lessons, when moving around the school and at playtimes. They are polite and well mannered. Older pupils support younger ones through a programme of 'buddying'. This promotes the caring ethos of the school. On the rare occasion that bullying happens, pupils know that adults will deal with it quickly.

Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to play an active role in school life. For instance, some pupils act as members of the junior safeguarding team or the school council. Pupils take pride in this work and take their duties seriously. They believe that they are making a difference.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad and ambitious. They have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn, with early years as the starting point. Leaders have largely developed a well-sequenced curriculum that builds on pupils' prior learning. However, in some subjects, such as computing, the curriculum is less well developed. Leaders have not fully mapped out what pupils need to know and remember. This means that teachers do not always check that pupils remember the most important knowledge and skills.

Children get off to a good start in learning to read. In early years, daily phonics sessions help them to learn their sounds quickly. There is a real focus on developing children's language skills. Leaders and staff select high-quality texts for teachers to use in lessons.

There is also a structured approach to the teaching of reading across the school. This helps pupils to develop their confidence to read well. Leaders promote a love of reading, and pupils receive extra help to keep up when they are struggling. The library is well used and is at the heart of the school. One pupil commented, 'It gives us inspiration to read, and we can get lost in a world of books.' Most pupils read fluently by the end of key stage 1 and continue to read widely as they move up through the school.

Subject leaders are passionate about and know their subject well. They have devised clear plans to improve their subject and regularly monitor the curriculum. However, some subject leaders have not had the opportunity to act on what they have found out to enable pupils to know and remember more.

Teachers assess pupils' learning thoroughly. They use assessment information to build on pupils' knowledge systematically. They use 'in the moment' assessments to adapt their teaching and to plan pupils' future learning.

Teachers understand the different needs of pupils. As a result, the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early. Pupils with SEND receive the support they need to work alongside their peers. Leaders are determined that pupils with SEND get all the help that they need.

Pupils understand the importance of physical and mental health to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They have a developing knowledge of fundamental British values. Pupils understand the importance of tolerance and respect for everyone. They enjoy attending a range of clubs, including those for choir, art, coding and sports.

Leaders and staff manage and deal with pupils' behaviour well. They recognise pupils' strengths and identify the cause of any poor behaviour. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed and focus on their work in lessons. Leaders work closely with families to improve the attendance of pupils who do not regularly attend school.

Staff are proud to work at the school and feel that leaders make every effort to consider their well-being and workload. One teacher commented, 'I can't tell you the difference that leaders have made.'

Governors know the school well. They want pupils to succeed and to be happy. They provide challenge and support and aspire for the school to be 'a beacon of excellence'. The multi-academy trust has put support in place to help leaders. This includes managing some recent changes to staffing.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is woven into everyone's daily practice. Therefore, there is a healthy culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, maintain the belief that 'it could happen here'. They ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to protect children. Staff understand these procedures and are vigilant to spot any potential concerns.

There is a strong emphasis on pupils' learning strategies to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of subjects, pupils' essential learning is not made clear in the curriculum. This means that pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that all subject curriculums outline the essential learning clearly.
- The evaluation and monitoring of some subjects are still at an early stage. While leaders have monitored their subject, they have not had a chance to act on their findings to improve pupils' learning further. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders receive the support needed to carry out their roles effectively and to bring about improvement in these subjects.

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	148136
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10267794
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alan Stancliffe
Headteacher	Rachel Woollam
Website	www.alsagerhighfields.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provider.
- Leaders operate a breakfast club.

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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the lead inspector held meetings with the headteacher. He also met four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also held a meeting with four trustees of the multi-academy trust, including the chief executive officer.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

- The inspectors viewed a range of safeguarding documentation. They examined checks on safer recruitment and spoke with members of staff to check their safeguarding knowledge.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science and computing. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils, and viewed examples of pupils' work.
- An inspector observed children in early years and pupils in key stage 1 reading to a trusted adult.
- The inspectors spoke with members of staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- The inspectors considered the responses, including the free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys. An inspector also spoke to parents and carers at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, school improvement priorities, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records, behaviour records, attendance records and minutes of meetings held by the governing body.

Inspection team

Barry Yardsley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Joan Grant

Ofsted Inspector

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