

Inspection of a good school: Alderbrook School

Blossomfield Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 1SN

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2023

Outcome

Alderbrook School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Alderbrook school leaders and pupils share the same high aspirations. Pupils understand and follow the school values to be ambitious, brave and kind. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and respectful. Teachers treat pupils as individuals and pupils welcome this. Pupils work hard and achieve very well, including pupils receiving specialist support in the school's additionally resourced provision (ARP).

There is a purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils say they can focus on their learning well. Most pupils work hard and want to do well. On the rare occasions when there was low-level disruption, teachers acted quickly and efficiently to address this. During social times, pupils walk and mix in a calm and orderly manner. Pupils feel safe. They say they know who to talk to about any concerns they have.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. The extra-curricular programme is rich and diverse. Pupils regularly take part in a range of clubs such as debating and yoga. Pupils value being able to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and school productions. Opportunities, such as the recent trips to Spain for modern foreign languages and Oxford and Cambridge Universities for personal development, enhance the curriculum.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum, including in the sixth form. All pupils follow the same curriculum, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders' actions to improve the curriculum have led to improved pupil outcomes by the end of key stages 4 and 5.

Curriculum leaders identify the key knowledge that pupils need to learn. The order of knowledge is also clearly set out. For example, in drama, Year 7 pupils build on their improvisational skills to develop more scripted, real-world scenarios in Year 8. However, in some subjects, teachers do not take opportunities to develop and challenge pupils'

knowledge and understanding as fully as they might. For example, some teachers do not always ask pupils questions that have sufficient depth, or set challenging tasks for pupils to complete. This means that pupils are not able to fully extend their understanding of different topics.

Leaders quickly identify pupils with SEND. 'Pupil profiles' provide useful information for staff about pupils' individual needs. Teachers use this information effectively to adapt their teaching. Leaders ensure that all pupils access the same, ambitious curriculum. They adapt the curriculum to meet all pupils' needs. This means that pupils with SEND successfully access learning and achieve well, including pupils who need specialist support for autistic spectrum disorder.

Leaders are developing an extensive range of strategies to support pupils who are not confident readers. These strategies include specialist teachers, who rapidly address weaknesses in pupils' phonics, grammar and comprehension. Teachers encourage pupils to read often, including during tutor sessions. Teachers model reading by highlighting key, thematic words. Teachers also discuss pupils' views on these themes. Leaders continue to promote pupils reading widely and often. This is helping to improve pupils' reading across the school.

Most pupils' behaviour and attitudes are respectful and positive. Inappropriate language and behaviour are rarely heard or seen. Pupils say that derogatory language is uncommon and dealt with quickly by leaders if it does happen. 'Well done Wednesdays' and 'Students of the month' promote positive behaviours across the school. Pupils welcome this.

Pupils' well-being is at the forefront of leaders' vision, including pupils' mental health. Leaders actively engage with pupils who need support. Parents and carers are very positive about this support. Leaders have a well-planned programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils learn about topics such as healthy relationships, democracy and online safety. That said, the embedding of pupils' knowledge and experience is inconsistent. This aspect of personal development continues to be a priority for leaders.

All students receive unbiased information on potential next steps and high-quality careers guidance. Pupils and students in the sixth form discuss careers, university aspirations and apprenticeships. This prepares them well for the next stages of their lives. Leaders continue to develop more opportunities for pupils in Year 10 to complete work experience.

Senior leaders, and trustees, know their school very well. They act with determination to improve any aspects that do not meet their high expectations. Leaders have a well-thought-out professional development programme for staff and have ensured that there are opportunities for collaboration. The majority of staff feel very well supported and consulted about policy changes. Trustees are well informed about the curriculum. They support and hold leaders to account for the decisions taken.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is exceptionally well embedded in the culture of the school. Leaders are visible in person and their photographs are on display around the school. Leaders know the pupils and their local context exceptionally well. They use this knowledge to plan support and help for pupils and their families. External agencies are contacted quickly where early help is required. All staff are proactive in reporting any concerns. Staff, and trustees, receive extensive training which is updated throughout the year.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to broaden their learning. This means that pupils miss opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of the subject. Leaders should ensure that all teachers continue to provide pupils with a range of learning activities and questions that will challenge pupils, expand their learning and deepen their understanding.
- Some of the key knowledge within the PSHE curriculum is not as embedded as it should be across Years 7 to 13. This means that some pupils and students understand, and can remember, key knowledge and others cannot. Leaders should ensure that all teachers of the PSHE curriculum revisit and embed key knowledge over Years 7 to 13 consistently, to enable pupils and students to be fully prepared for the next stages of their education, careers and lives.

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 April 2018.

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	136994
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10269448
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
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	1,591
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	240
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Annette Scott
Headteacher	Thomas Beveridge
Website	www.alderbrook.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 April 2018

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in March 2020.
- The school is a single Academy Trust.
- The school makes use of three registered alternative providers.
- The school provides specialist support for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. Places are allocated by the local authority.
- 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.

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 focused on the following deep dives: drama, geography, mathematics and modern foreign languages. 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.
- Inspectors also looked at other subjects to check the curriculum and how these subjects are taught.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum and improvement planning. The school's website was also checked.
- Inspectors talked to staff and leaders about safeguarding arrangements. They examined how leaders make employment checks on staff and scrutinised further safeguarding records. They also looked at how incidents reported by pupils are recorded and analysed.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors held meetings with trustees, the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, pastoral leaders, teachers, including early careers teachers, students and pupils. They also talked informally to students, pupils and staff to gather information about school life.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered Ofsted's staff survey and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

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