

Inspection of Alder Brook

Walnut Road, Winton, Salford, Lancashire M30 8LE

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 September 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Insufficient evidence**

Previous inspection grade **Good**

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a calm and friendly place where pupils feel happy and secure. Pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), respond well to the warm and encouraging relationships that adults forge with them.

Many pupils join the school at different points, having experienced difficulties in the past. From the moment they join, pupils are encouraged to express their ideas and to talk about any worries that they have. They are treated with dignity and kindness by staff. This helps pupils to build trust and to feel safe. As a result, they settle in quickly and, for the most part, they get on well together.

Pupils have a clear understanding of adults' high expectations for their behaviour and achievement. Pupils benefit from attentive support to help them regulate their emotions and behaviour. Typically, pupils are polite, and they are willing to work hard. They make strong academic progress from their starting points.

Pupils were enthusiastic about the many exciting trips they experience, such as visits to a beach, a narrowboat and a local ski centre. A range of visitors to the school help pupils to learn about how to avoid risks in the local community.

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

The school has responded positively to recent changes. The school now caters for a larger number of pupils with a broader range and complexity of need. As many more pupils now stay at the school on long-term placements, the curriculum has been revised accordingly. The ambitious curriculum maintains a sharp focus on the key elements that are needed to ensure pupils' future success. At the same time, the school now offers a wider range of subjects.

Most of the pupils who attend the school have experienced disruption to their education. Right from the start, staff work closely with pupils' previous schools and their parents and carers to gather a clear understanding of pupils' strengths and difficulties. Once they start at the school, pupils are closely monitored by staff so that their evolving needs are identified accurately and catered for comprehensively. Staff use their strong expertise to make adaptations to their approaches while ensuring that all pupils access the same ambitious curriculum.

Clear policies and agreed approaches have been adopted to support pupils to regulate their own behaviour. These well-considered strategies and routines are implemented sensitively by staff. Generally, pupils behave well, and the atmosphere in school is nurturing and productive. Any incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with well by staff. This means any disruption to lessons is minimised. In addition, leaders analyse behaviour incidents and respond thoroughly to ensure that any necessary adjustments to provision are made.

The school's determined belief that learning to read well is the key to future achievement underpins the whole curriculum. Many pupils who join the school struggle to read well. Staff have regular training that helps them to deliver the clearly structured phonics programme effectively. They provide additional support for any pupils who need extra help so that they become fluent and accurate readers as soon as possible. Teachers make sure that pupils practise their reading every day. Older pupils enjoy reading and were eager to discuss their favourite books.

Likewise, in some other subjects, the important knowledge that pupils should learn, and the order in which it should be taught, has been clarified. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to explain ideas clearly. They check that pupils' understanding is secure before introducing new content, quickly addressing misconceptions. Consequently, in these subjects, pupils achieve well from their starting points. However, in a few foundation subjects, teachers lack sufficient clarity and guidance about the specific content that pupils need to learn. In these subjects, pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

The school offers rich opportunities for pupils to broaden their horizons and to increase their social confidence. Pupils understand that people have different religions, backgrounds and families and that all deserve equal respect. Pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education.

Parents are positive about the school and the difference that it has made to their children's attitudes towards learning. They appreciate the regular communication they have with staff to discuss how their children are progressing and to contribute towards their targets for learning and behaviour.

The strong expertise of the members of the school's management committee contributes strongly to the school's development. Members of the committee provide robust challenge and effective support to the school.

Staff were positive about the adjustments that have been made to make their workload more manageable. They appreciate that there is meaningful consideration of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the components of knowledge that pupils should learn are not clear enough to teachers. This hinders pupils in developing a secure understanding of some important concepts over time. The school should ensure that teachers have clear information about the knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which it should be taught. This will ensure that pupils' understanding builds more securely over time in a greater range of 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	133678
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10226200
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sue Woodgate
Headteacher	Giles Caldwell
Website	http://alderbrook.salfordpru.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll at the school has risen substantially. Many more pupils have longer-term placements at the school.
- All of the pupils who attend the school have SEND. Some pupils are dual registered at their mainstream primary school in the local authority.
- Several new members of staff have been appointed.
- At the time of inspection, there were no children attending the Reception class.
- Leaders are currently making use of registered alternative provision for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other leaders. They spoke with subject leaders and other members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with four members of the school's management committee, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also spoke to two representatives of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. They spoke with pupils to discuss their views of the school, their learning, their behaviour and safety.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed some pupils reading to a familiar adult. Inspectors also reviewed several other aspects of the school's curriculum.
- The lead inspector met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and reviewed samples of documentation relating to SEND.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of evidence about pupils' attendance, safety and behaviour, including records of when restrictive physical intervention has been used by staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. An inspector also spoke to several parents face to face and by phone. The inspectors also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.
- An inspector spoke to a number of schools who have placed pupils at the setting to seek their views.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents shared by school leaders, including the school improvement plan and documentation from management committee meetings.

Inspection team

Janette Walker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mavis Smith

His Majesty's Inspector

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