

Inspection of an outstanding school: Alfriston School

Penn Road, Knotty Green, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire HP9 2TS

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 September 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Jinna Male. This school is part of the Alfriston School Trust. The school is overseen by a board of governors, chaired by Kalpesh Brahmhatt.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to come to this nurturing school as they feel that staff care about them. They make positive friendships because staff insist that pupils treat each other with kindness and respect. Pupils help each other to make the school a warm and friendly place to be. Student prefects are impressive role models who help pupils understand how they can contribute to the positive ethos the school exudes.

The 'Learning for Living' curriculum helps pupils to be ready for adulthood. Pupils learn to be resilient when faced with challenging situations, such as presenting their work to the rest of the class. An extensive offer of vocational courses, such as environmental science, provides pupils with real-life experiences in the workplace. Here, pupils grow fruit and vegetables and learn to cook healthy meals together. Pupils learn to have goals and ambitions for the future. They show great determination to succeed.

The school recognises that pupils do not always experience academic learning that securely builds knowledge over time. Refinements are being made to address this. The curriculum is also being strengthened in subjects such as geography and history. However, these changes are not yet fully developed, so pupils are not learning in the academic curriculum as well as they potentially could be.

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

Pupils study a wide range of interesting vocational courses at key stage 4 and post-16. Practical experience helps to develop pupils' employability skills, such as cooking or

hairdressing. This raises pupils' ambitions. They learn to recognise the valuable contribution they could make through these employment routes, once they leave school.

Pupils study the same breadth of academic subjects as they would in a mainstream school. While the curriculum clearly sets out the larger ideas that pupils need to learn, it does not clearly break these down into precise knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils do not always learn in an ordered way. This hinders how well they can connect one idea to the next. For some pupils, this limits how successfully they acquire a deeper understanding of concepts.

Furthermore, the school has not established systems to check how well pupils are remembering more. This means that leaders do not always know if teaching is helping to close gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school recognises this. It is providing training to ensure that the impact of the curriculum is more effectively checked and considered to help pupils retain the knowledge they need for the next stages of learning.

Staff gain a detailed knowledge of pupils' needs through regular training. This means teaching support is carefully adapted to help all pupils participate in learning while preparing them for adulthood. In English, for example, pupils regularly give oral presentations of their work. This helps them to feel confident to speak in front of an audience. Those who need additional help to read receive regular, targeted support. This builds their confidence to read with increasing fluency. A rich offer of therapeutic support helps pupils to work towards their education, health and care plan (EHC plan) targets. This includes specialist support with speech and language and occupational therapy.

The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' wider development. Pupils learn how to take care of their personal and mental health and form positive relationships in an age-appropriate way. Teachers carefully structure lessons to help pupils overcome worries that they may face as they grow into adulthood. The enrichment programme takes into consideration pupils' many talents and interests. They enjoy playing football together at breaktimes or swimming in the school's indoor pool. Exciting residential trips away from home are designed to help pupils experience independence. They learn to take care of their personal and health needs.

Students in the post-16 provision attend suitable work experiences to further develop employability skills such as customer service. They regularly revisit and practise the skills they need to be an independent adult later in life. Opportunities to practise leadership skills as a student leader are abundant. In every year group, pupils receive specialised guidance to help them to make informed decisions about future careers and education.

Pupils behave very well in lessons as teachers clearly communicate high expectations. Teachers help pupils learn the vocabulary they need to communicate difficult feelings. Pupils receive effective help to manage their frustrations and get back to learning. Those who need support to follow the school rules receive this. Where needed, the school seeks further expertise to provide the additional help that some pupils need.

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 parts of the academic curriculum, the important knowledge and skills have not been clearly identified and ordered. As a result, learning is not always designed in a ways that helps pupils connect key ideas together. The school must continue to review and develop this part of the curriculum so that all pupils acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be prepared for the next stages of learning.
- Checks are not yet consistently being made to consider how well the academic curriculum is being implemented. This means that leaders are unable to assure themselves that pupils are securing the knowledge that they need. The school must ensure that there are effective systems and processes in place to fully evaluate the impact of the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in July 2013.

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	137934
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10256564
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kalpesh Brahmhatt
Headteacher	Jinna Male
Website	www.alfristonschool.com
Date of previous inspection	11 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Alfriston School is a single-sex girls' school that provides education for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. All pupils attending the school have an EHC plan.
- The school is in a single-academy trust.
- The school provides overnight boarding for 20 pupils, up to three nights per week. At the time of inspection, there were 15 pupils who were boarding.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also met with the representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and vocational studies. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also reviewed plans for other subjects in the curriculum.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including the free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- 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.
- Inspectors reviewed and scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes of governors' meetings and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.

Inspection team

Michelle Payne, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Louise Ling

Ofsted Inspector

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