

Inspection of Aston Academy

Aughton Road, Swallownest, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S26 4SF

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 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

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

The principal of this school is Afshah Saeed. This school is part of Aston Community Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Rebecca Scutt, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Barton. There is also an executive principal, Rebecca Hibberd, who is responsible for this school and two others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils study a broad range of well-planned subjects. The school has recently introduced new strategies to improve the quality of education. This is having a positive effect, but pupils learn more effectively in some subjects than in others. This is, in part, due to teaching not being consistently matched to the needs and abilities of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified well. However, the support pupils with SEND receive to help their learning varies across the school. Some pupils are happy, but others are dissatisfied with their experiences at the school.

Pupils have opportunities to join many different clubs, such as football, science, ukulele, creative writing and art. Sixth-form students take on an active leadership role in the school. They have good relationships with teachers.

Most pupils behave well, but some do not behave well outside their lessons. Some pupils have not developed positive attitudes to learning or follow the values of the school, the 'Aston Way'. Bullying can sometimes occur. Most pupils attend regularly but some are persistently absent.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe online and about local dangers, such as those found at a nearby reservoir.

Leaders from the multi-academy trust (the trust) have a clear strategy for further improvement. The trust is working to improve relationships with the community.

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

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum. Pupils study a broad range of subjects that helps to prepare them well for future education, training or employment. In most subjects, the curriculum is well designed and develops pupils' knowledge and understanding. Students in the sixth form can choose from a variety of courses which are well planned and taught.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Teachers use 'do now' tasks to revisit prior learning and assess pupils' progress using live marking. Where these strategies are consistently used well, pupils rapidly acquire knowledge and know how to improve. Students' learning in the sixth form is supported effectively by teachers who demonstrate strong subject knowledge. Teachers regularly assess students and adapt future learning well to meet the needs of each student, including those with SEND.

Pupils make less progress in lessons where teaching does not meet their needs and abilities. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. In some lessons, pupils are passive and questioning does not check their learning. This limits how often pupils' developing knowledge is checked and misconceptions identified. Pupils with SEND receive variable support. In some cases,

support matches the identified needs of pupils well. Where this is not the case, the progress that pupils make through the curriculum is reduced.

The school has prioritised reading. For example, the school has recently launched the 'everyone reads in class (ERIC)' strategy. The school has also introduced regular assessments of pupils' reading age. The weakest readers are identified and receive the support they need. The school is aware that these strategies are new and it is too soon to gauge the effect of this strategy on pupils' fluency and comprehension.

The school has introduced a new behaviour system. Most staff and pupils feel that this has improved behaviour in lessons. Most pupils behave well in lessons and are respectful to teachers and visitors. A small number of pupils do not stay on task in lessons and this is not always challenged by teachers. Some pupils do not behave well outside lessons. The school recognises this and has taken action to increase the capacity of supervising staff. Most pupils attend school regularly. However, some pupils do not attend regularly enough. The school has put in place several strategies that have started to improve the attendance of these pupils. Leaders are aware that there needs to be a sharper focus on data trends to target these strategies effectively.

Pupils receive a well-structured programme of personal development. They are taught about healthy and unhealthy relationships, how to keep themselves safe, fundamental British values and sex education. The teaching of personal, social and health education is inconsistent. This means that some pupils do not develop a deeper understanding of some topics.

Pupils are provided with opportunities to take on leadership roles at the school. For example, the school council has recently helped to improve the diversity of food offered in the school canteen and support the addition of new clubs. Sixth-form students take an active role in the school. For example, they lead competitions for younger pupils and act as mental health peer mentors for Year 7 pupils. Pupils receive comprehensive information and guidance on careers.

Leaders have put in place several strategies to rapidly improve the school. The trust has invested resources and increased capacity and expertise of staff to make necessary changes. Many changes are having a positive effect. Staff are proud to work at the school. The trust recognises that work is needed to build relationships between the school and the community it serves.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teaching is not consistently adapted to meet the needs and abilities of different pupils. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. The school should ensure that teaching is consistently adapted to meet the individual needs and abilities of pupils.
- New processes for supporting pupils with SEND have yet to be fully embedded and implemented. This means that there is inconsistency in the support that some pupils with SEND receive. The school should ensure that new systems and processes for supporting pupils with SEND are fully embedded and implemented.
- New behavioural systems and expectations are not fully embedded and enacted across the school. Some pupils do not behave well. The school should ensure that new systems and expectations are consistently applied across the school and that more pupils are supported to manage their behaviour appropriately, both in lessons and during social times.
- Some pupils do not attend school frequently enough. The school should ensure that strategies are precisely targeted to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent.
- Several new processes and systems have been recently implemented, but their impact is not consistently monitored by leaders. This means that, sometimes, leaders are unaware of emerging trends that need action. The school and trust should ensure that monitoring processes are in place and that leaders understand and quickly respond to emerging trends.

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 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	136718
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	10317721
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	1,599
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	117
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
CEO	Rebecca Scutt
Chair of trust	John Barton
Executive principal	Rebecca Hibberd
Principal	Afshah Saeed
Website	www.astonacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	13 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The most recent inspection of the school took place in June 2018, when the school was judged to remain good.
- The school has been an academy since 2011.
- The principal has been in post since April 2023.
- The school uses 12 unregistered providers and one registered alternative provider of education.
- 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

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. 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 the headteacher, other leaders, staff and pupils. They met with trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: science, mathematics, English, art, geography and religious education. 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 visited lessons and considered how the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND were addressed. They observed pupils at various times of the school day.
- Inspectors spoke to representatives of the alternative provisions used by the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; considered the views of parents; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Chris Carr, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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