

Inspection of Aylesbury High School

Walton Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP21 7SX

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Marieke Forster. This school is part of Aylesbury High School Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Marieke Forster, and overseen by a board of trustees, co-chaired by Helen Bush and Kate Weir.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since June 2012.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are, rightly, proud to attend this excellent school. They meet its exceptionally high expectations, excelling academically and flourishing into well-rounded individuals. Pupils love learning and embody the school's values of 'boundless aspiration, resilient bravery, curious engagement and selfless generosity'. They rise to high levels of challenge in lessons and are excited to learn more. Pupils develop remarkable independence and study skills through the very deliberate work of the school. This helps them feel confident and prepared for their next stages of learning.

Alongside the inspiring academic curriculum, pupils benefit from the many meaningful leadership roles that they take on. These provide pupils and older students with the opportunity to understand the positive impact they can have in their school and beyond. The house system is particularly impressive, with pupil-led competitions that showcase talents, teamwork and organisational skills. The head girl and the pupil 'cabinet' are integral to the school. They work with the adult leadership team to address issues raised by pupils and to run large events, such as graduation ceremonies and fundraising events. Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences at the school and about the nurture they receive that helps them achieve highly in a safe and vibrant environment.

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

The school is unashamedly ambitious for all pupils. A meticulously crafted curriculum ensures that pupils build new knowledge and skills at an impressive rate. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is excellent. The school maintains the same high academic expectations for these pupils, ensuring they receive carefully adapted support where appropriate. Reading is embedded into the school's curriculum and culture, with pupils exploring a wide range of academic literature to develop increasingly sophisticated research, interpretation and evaluation skills in their subjects.

Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent. This means that pupils benefit from very clear explanations, helpful adaptations and rich discussions in lessons. Staff encourage pupils skilfully to develop extended answers in speaking and written responses. Pupils know that they are expected to think hard and to articulate their ideas and opinions clearly. As a result, pupils discuss their strengths and areas for improvement confidently using a wide range of precise vocabulary that they are taught within the curriculum.

Pupils achieve exceptionally highly. Teachers' checks on pupils' learning are used intelligently to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly. Pupils understand that learning is a process and that tests can help them to improve. They gladly work on developing their knowledge further. Pupils are unafraid to tackle difficult work, ably demonstrating the school's value of resilient bravery. Students in the sixth form benefit from the same aspirational support as the rest of the school. They too

achieve highly and, with expert unbiased careers guidance, move on to ambitious destinations when they leave.

This is a calm and joyful place. Pupils know that they are fortunate to attend this school. They love learning and demonstrate exceptional maturity in all lessons. Pupils are highly respectful of each other. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and kind, which helps strengthen pupils' exceedingly strong attitudes to learning. When pupils experience difficulties, they know there is a strong pastoral team that will help them. Staff work sensitively together to ensure pupils have the right support. Importantly, pupils know they are listened to. The school proactively seeks to understand pupils' well-being and provides help rapidly where there is a need.

Pupils develop strong moral and social characters through the carefully delivered wider curriculum. They are confident talking about inclusivity and diversity. Pupils are proud that their school encourages everyone to be themselves, find their own talents and value different opinions. Staff help pupils to explore a wealth of important issues related to the world through regular assemblies and other activities. The huge range of clubs on offer then provides pupils with opportunities to develop their interests further, such as in law, computer science and philosophy to name just a few.

School leaders and trustees continually seek to improve provision for pupils. They are meticulous in their evaluation of the school and make meaningful changes where necessary. The recent increase in the number of trustees has added further capacity and experience to an already very effective team. Leaders are mindful of staff's workload and take appropriate action to ensure that they provide support for staff's mental health. Staff are proud to work here and value highly the training opportunities available. This is a highly effective school that is constantly adapting and evolving to provide the very best for its pupils and staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	136846
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10288004
Type of school	Grammar
School category	Academy 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	1,328
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	396
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Bush and Kate Weir (Co-chairs)
CEO of the trust	Marieke Forster
Headteacher	Marieke Forster
Website	www.ahs.bucks.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 June 2012 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The predecessor school, also named Aylesbury High School, became a single academy trust in 2011. It is currently the only school in this trust.
- 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.
- The school uses four registered alternative providers.

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.
- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, art 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 considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and additional written comments from parents. They reviewed the survey responses completed by staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Ally Aldridge-Gibbons, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Paul McKeown	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Agle	Ofsted Inspector
Gemma Williamson	Ofsted Inspector
Charles Joseph	Ofsted Inspector

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