

Inspection of Atherton High School

Hamilton Street, Atherton, Greater Manchester M46 0AY

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 January 2024

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Ben Layzell. This school is part of the Education Partnership Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sharon Roscoe, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ian Brown

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend Atherton High School. They value the positive relationships that they have with their teachers. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), feel happy and safe. They relish the warm and welcoming atmosphere at the school.

In the main, pupils are respectful of each other. Pupils work hard to meet the high expectations that the school has of their achievement. They are motivated to learn and maintain a positive attitude towards their learning. As such, the learning environment is calm and purposeful.

The trust has worked with the school to improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the curriculum. This supports teachers to help pupils to know and remember more. Consequently, most pupils achieve well.

Many pupils make good use of the extra-curricular opportunities that are available. For instance, they are enjoying the preparations for their 'Little Mermaid' musical performance. Such experiences build pupils' confidence to work with others from different classes and year groups. Some pupils also thrive in leadership positions, such as student council representatives. These roles enable them to make a positive contribution to the school and the local community.

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

The trustees and the local governing body have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They provide appropriate challenge and support to the school. This helps the trust and the school to make the necessary improvements to policies and systems. The school has increased its engagement with parents and carers over time. This means that staff are better informed about the barriers that prevent some pupils from attending school or achieving well. This is leading to positive action to help improve attendance rates and pupils' academic success.

The curriculum for pupils, including for those with SEND, is ambitious. It identifies the knowledge that pupils should learn and in the order in which subject content should be taught. The trust works closely with the school to review how well this curriculum is being taught. Teachers value the time and guidance that they are given to develop their teaching practice. This makes their workload manageable and improves their confidence and effectiveness in delivering the curriculum.

In the main, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to design effective learning activities. They place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' subject-specific vocabulary. This helps most pupils to connect their prior knowledge to new learning successfully.

The strategies that most teachers use to check and address pupils' misconceptions are typically effective. This means that most pupils build on their learning well over

time. However, on occasion, some teachers do not check and address forgotten learning effectively. For some pupils, this slows down their progress through the curriculum.

The trust has worked carefully with the school to improve how the needs of pupils with SEND are identified and met. Information about the needs of pupils with SEND is communicated with staff regularly. This enables them to make relevant adaptations to their teaching. As a result, most pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers and achieve well.

The school has suitable systems to identify and support pupils who struggle to read. Staff are equipped with the knowledge that they need to help these pupils to read fluently and confidently. Most pupils enjoy reading widely and often.

Typically, pupils are polite and adhere to the school routines. The system to manage pupils' behaviour is used consistently well by most staff. Therefore, learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

The school is committed to ensuring that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online and offline. For example, they know about different types of relationships and how to resist negative peer pressure. Pupils have a strong awareness of how to keep physically healthy.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn about the beliefs and opinions of different people. However, some pupils have limited meaningful and rich experiences of the diverse world in which they live. Consequently, a small number of pupils are less understanding of the importance of respecting people who are different to themselves.

Pupils in key stage 4 benefit from a wide range of careers information, education, advice and guidance. They use this to prepare for their next steps in education or employment. Nonetheless, some pupils across the key stages do not receive sufficient information and experience of the world of work. This means that they are not prepared as well as they could be for their future career pathways.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, some teachers do not check that pupils have remembered their learning. At times, this hinders pupils from gaining a secure understanding of new concepts. The school should ensure that teachers make sure that any forgotten learning is identified and addressed.

- Some pupils have limited opportunities and experiences to learn about life in modern Britain. A small number of pupils do not understand the importance of tolerance and respect for others as well as they should. The school should enhance its programme to promote pupils' personal development, so that they are prepared well for the diverse world in which they live in.
- Some pupils do not receive enough information about different career pathways. This means that they do not have the knowledge that they need to make informed choices about their next steps in education or employment. The school should improve its careers programme, so that pupils across all key stages are better prepared for their chosen careers.

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	138233
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10294365
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	525
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Brown
CEO of the trust	Sharon Roscoe
Headteacher	Ben Layzell
Website	www.athertonhigh.com
Date of previous inspection	14 December 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Education Partnership Trust multi-academy trust.
- The school make use of three unregistered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- The school provide before- and after-school care for pupils.
- 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.
- The inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of the local governing body and the board of trustees, including the chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the alternative providers.
- Inspectors held meetings with the CEO of the trust, the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors met with a range of other staff and leaders during the inspection.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during social times and during movement around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, English, Spanish and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders and teachers, visited a sample of lessons, reviewed samples of pupils' work and spoke with some pupils.
- Inspectors also met with subject leaders to review other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for personal development, pupil premium, behaviour and attendance, alternative provision, early careers teachers, careers, SEND and reading.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' self-evaluation, attendance and behaviour records.
- 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 considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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