

# Inspection of Aylestone School

Broadlands House, Broadlands Lane, Hereford, Herefordshire HR1 1HY

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Inspection dates: 9 and 10 July 2024

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Aylestone is a small secondary school where everyone knows each other well. Staff build warm and supportive relationships with pupils. They work hard to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life beyond school. As one parent commented in response to Ofsted's survey, 'staff genuinely care and make every effort to put parent and child worries at ease.'

Pupils are polite and greet visitors warmly. Many pupils talk about the friendship bonds they have formed since coming to the school. In lessons, pupils generally show a positive attitude to their learning and complete tasks well. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that they have every confidence in staff to resolve issues should they occur.

The curriculum provides an appropriate range of subjects for pupils to study. At key stage 4, pupils can opt for various GCSE or vocational subjects. However, in some areas, the curriculum is not taught consistently well. This can impact the progress that pupils make.

There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities to broaden pupils' wider development. There are several different house events which include a pantomime at Christmas and an 'Aylestone's Got Talent' show. There are also different sports, music and drama clubs as well as a popular Lego club.

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

The school's curriculum is suitably ambitious for all pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has ensured that, in each subject, the curriculum is sequenced effectively. Topics build logically over time so that it is clear what pupils should know, understand and be able to do at the end of each year and key stage.

In many subjects, the curriculum is taught well. In mathematics and history, for example, teachers present new learning clearly and model tasks effectively. They check understanding carefully and provide opportunities for pupils to practise new learning. In this way, pupils are secure in what they know and are making better progress. However, in some other subjects, teachers do not routinely check what pupils are learning and where gaps in knowledge or errors might be. In addition, when assessment strategies are not used consistently, pupils are unsure of when they are doing well or how they can improve. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable in these subjects.

The school has put in place an initial assessment for pupils in Years 7 and 8 to identify pupils' reading ages. However, this information is not being used to further pinpoint the precise gaps pupils have with their reading. Some small group support has been put in place for the very weakest readers but there is not a coherent

strategy in place to support all pupils to improve their reading skills. The school does not have a clear overview of how they are encouraging pupils to read more widely.

Pupils with SEND are very well supported. The school carefully identifies pupils' needs and regularly reviews this to ensure both educational, health and care (EHC) plans and 'pupil profiles' are up to date and reflect the progress pupils are making. Pupils who are part of the school's new 'The Bridge' provision are fully integrated into school life, receive high levels of support, and access a similar curriculum to their peers.

The school's personal development curriculum is well thought through and age appropriate. Pupils are taught about healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe outside of school and online. Pupils in key stage 3 are given the opportunity to discuss complex topics through 'empowerment lessons' and this builds successfully into key stage 4 where pupils have 'issues and ethics' lessons. The school has put pupils' mental health and wellbeing at the fore of their curriculum and pupils value the support and guidance they receive in this area.

There is a well-planned careers programme in place. Right from Year 7, pupils have access to careers related learning including workshops and assemblies. The school ensures that pupils have meaningful encounters with the world of work and are aware of the potential pathways available to them when they leave school, including apprenticeships.

Governors care about the school and want it to do well. There is a separate secondary committee to oversee the school's performance. That said, governors are not providing enough scrutiny and challenge to the performance of the school. In some areas, the school does not have strategic oversight of all aspects of its work. This can limit the ability to identify precisely where actions need to be targeted to help the school improve.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- There are inconsistencies in the way the curriculum is implemented. Some teachers do not use assessment strategies well and/or consistently check what pupils know and understand before moving on. This means that some pupils struggle to know what they do well and where they need to improve. The school should ensure that all teachers deliver the curriculum effectively to help pupils make better progress.

- The school has not put in place an effective reading strategy. As a result, gaps in pupils' reading ability are not being identified precisely to put in place the right support, and pupils' wider enjoyment of reading is not well developed. The school should ensure that all pupils, including weaker readers, are supported to help improve their reading skills and that pupils are encouraged to read more widely.
- The school needs to improve strategic oversight of all aspects of its work. This is because in some areas, there is insufficient precision to identify patterns and trends to inform future actions. The school should ensure that all leaders have a good understanding of their areas of responsibility and use information effectively to help the school move forward.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	116936
<b>Local authority</b>	Herefordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10322755
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	357
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Rachel Rice
<b>Headteacher</b>	Simon Robertson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.aylestone.hereford.sch.uk">www.aylestone.hereford.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 October 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Aylestone School is part of a federation of three schools that also includes two primary schools.
- The school has a specially resourced provision, 'The Bridge', for pupils with autism spectrum disorder on site.
- The school uses two registered and two unregistered alternative provisions.
- 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 second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body. Meetings were also held with the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and French. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also looked at other subjects to check how they are planned and taught.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 a range of school documents. These included information about behaviour, attendance, the school curriculum and improvement planning. The school website was also checked.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View and free-text comments. They also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil survey.

## **Inspection team**

Mark Howes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

Huw Bishop

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