

Alderbrook School

Blossomfield Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 1SN

Inspection dates

24–25 April 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is well led and managed. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and they are using this information to make further improvements.
- The new headteacher, supported by leaders and staff, has created a positive and ambitious culture. Leaders have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils.
- This is an inclusive school where pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders and staff openly promote equality of opportunity and diversity.
- The broad and balanced curriculum helps pupils to make good progress in many subjects. The school literacy policy is not yet embedded within the curriculum.
- Teaching is improving and there is some very high-quality practice in the school, especially in mathematics. However, not all teaching matches the quality of the best.
- Leaders have developed new systems for tracking pupils' progress and are starting to review and refine them to ensure that they are accurate.
- The sixth form provides well for its students. The requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme are met.
- Governors are skilled and knowledgeable. They have a clear understanding of the key issues the school needs to address to maintain a good standard of education. They hold leaders to account and support them effectively.
- Many groups of pupils, including girls, middle- and high prior-attaining pupils, make strong progress in the school. However, the progress of some pupils with complex and medical needs is slower than other groups.
- Leaders have created robust safeguarding systems and a culture where pupils feel safe and value the support of staff.
- Leaders are taking effective action to improve attendance, which, overall, is now close to the national average. Pupils with past poor attendance are coming to school more often than they did previously.
- Behaviour is usually good in the school, particularly in pupils' social time. Pupils are proud of their school and display attitudes that demonstrate values of inclusion and fairness.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should take further action to improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
 - all teaching matches the quality of the best that can be found in the school
 - the new assessment systems are used accurately to track pupils' progress
 - the literacy policy is embedded in teaching
 - leaders secure more positive working relationships with some parents and carers of pupils with complex needs in order to achieve the best educational outcomes for their child
 - improvements in attendance are sustained.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have a secure and accurate knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have taken appropriate actions to tackle areas of relative weakness. As a result, the quality of teaching and assessment has been reviewed and improved.
- With the support of an effective leadership team, the new headteacher has maintained the high aspirations the school has of its pupils at the same time as distributing the leadership structures at the school. Staff and pupils spoke highly of this style of leadership and the improvements it has led to since the last inspection, in particular the consistently good level of teaching.
- Middle leaders are an emerging strength of the school. Like senior leaders, they are ambitious for the pupils, have high aspirations and show no complacency. Middle leaders are open and honest about their strengths and weaknesses. They are becoming increasingly skilled in their roles and are now more able to support colleagues to ensure that pupils make good progress in lessons. They are keen to learn from each other and open to new ideas. There is, however, still some variability in how pupils achieve in different subjects.
- Leaders accurately evaluate strengths and weaknesses of teachers through a newly introduced appraisal and monitoring process. As a result, additional support through informal mentoring and coaching is put into place where needed. Leaders are committed to the professional development of staff to improve teaching. The vast majority of teachers value the opportunities they have to develop their practice through the training available.
- Leaders continue to develop the curriculum to suit the needs of pupils. Following consultation with staff and pupils, the school delivers a two year key stage 3 so that pupils can maintain a wider range of subjects and options at key stage 4.
- The curriculum, supplemented by enrichment activities, supports the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. There are wide ranges of extra-curricular activities, educational visits and pupil responsibilities that pupils can take part in.
- There are new systems to track pupils' progress and attainment. Pupils that are identified as underperforming have appropriate intervention strategies put in place, for example mentoring. However, these systems are not yet fully developed and leaders are reviewing them to ensure that they track pupils' progress accurately enough.
- The pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium are increasingly used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils and those who start at the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills. In addition to removing specific barriers to learning, leaders use the additional funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils have access to a wide range of educational activities. There is a clear focus on broadening pupils' horizons and raising their aspirations. School data for current cohorts shows that differences in progress between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are diminishing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities receive effective

support, many through the two additional resource centres at the school (one for autism spectrum disorders and one for speech and language impairment). Leaders use additional funding effectively to ensure that there are bespoke programmes in place so that pupils have as full an access to the curriculum as possible, often commissioning additional support from outside providers to complement the school support. Leaders are aware that there are a small number of parents whose children have complex needs, including medical needs, who they need to work closely with to find the best approach for their schooling in order to speed up their progress.

- Leaders work closely with Solihull local authority, including taking a leading role in the local inclusion and primary school meetings. The local authority provides the school with support through its school improvement partnership. The school makes the most of the opportunities this network offers in terms of staff professional development and sharing of effective practice.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is strong.
- Governors know the school well and understand what it needs to do to continue to provide a good education for pupils. Governors receive detailed information about the quality of provision in the school. Consequently, they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Those responsible for governance have a wide range of skills and experience that they use well to hold leaders to account and support further improvement. For example, governors have established the Alderbrook Community Forum.
- Governors contribute skilfully to all aspects of the strategic direction of the school. They have a thorough understanding of the school's financial management. For example, they supported leaders in the development of the new sixth-form provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- This aspect of the school's work is well led, and staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and duties.
- Leaders have established safeguarding procedures and policies that meet statutory requirements. The school's single central record is compliant, records are stored securely and leaders ensure that all members of staff receive appropriate training.
- The majority of pupils said that they feel safe and well cared for. Pupils are taught to be safe and healthy and are well aware of issues surrounding radicalisation, extremism, mental health and online safety. Pupils said that if they have a concern, they know who to go to and trust that it will be dealt with effectively.
- Leaders have a good knowledge of the context in which they operate. They work proactively with external agencies and families to provide appropriate support for vulnerable pupils, for example providing life coaching and specialist mental health support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- There is some very high-quality teaching in the school that has led to good outcomes over time. As a result of support and training and the recruitment of some new staff, the overall quality of teaching continues to improve. There is strong teaching in every subject area now, as well as very strong practice in mathematics.
- Where teaching is most effective, it is carefully planned to provide challenge for pupils with different starting points. Staff have high expectations and use questions and their subject knowledge well to deepen pupils' understanding. They use lesson time productively to develop pupils' skills and knowledge. However, some teaching is not as consistently strong as it could be.
- Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge. In some subjects, such as mathematics, teachers are able to enthuse and engage pupils and expertly develop their numerical skills. Good levels of challenge were evident in a range of subjects, including humanities, English and mathematics. In these instances, teachers had ambitious expectations of pupils' work. Inspectors saw many lessons that were extremely well planned, and pupils were enjoying their learning.
- All staff follow the school's marking and assessment policy. Pupils engage regularly in re-learn activities in which they have an opportunity to improve their work. Pupils are able to say specifically what they need to do to improve. This strategy is consistent across all subject areas.
- A positive climate for learning permeates the school. Pupils are keen to improve. Pupils show a pride in their work and books are very well presented. Pupils value the extra time that teachers give to them to support them in their studies.
- Teachers set homework in line with the school's policy. It is used effectively to embed learning and develop new skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The school gives parents clear information about how their child is progressing and what they need to do to improve. Meetings with parents give them opportunities to discuss their children's progress with staff in more depth.
- Leaders have introduced a comprehensive literacy policy and are aware that they need to ensure that all teachers use it in a consistent way so that it supports pupils to improve their communication skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils demonstrate values that are at the heart of the school's ethos, respect for diversity and inclusion. Leaders promote all aspects of pupils' welfare and effective systems are in place to ensure that pupils are cared for well. Pupils value the strong relationships they have with staff at the school.
- Pupils are proud of their school, and the majority are confident and ambitious. They value their education and the standard of teaching that the school provides. They are

self-aware and see that education is important for their future success and well-being.

- Pupils spoke very positively about the personal and social education programme at the school. Work that they do in these sessions is valued, especially during 'Life ready days'. Many activities are designed to raise pupils' awareness of diversity and to promote tolerance, as well as preparing them for the world of work. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding of modern society beyond their own community and of current social issues.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe, including from extremism and exploitation. Pupils trust leaders to take rapid and appropriate action to deal with any concerns that they have.
- The majority of pupils said that bullying is rare and that, if it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly. However, a small number of pupils and their parents think that there is more that the school can do to ensure that all pupils feel safe at school. Leaders acknowledge that there is more that can be done to engage with these pupils and parents.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. Pupils' appearance is very smart and they are punctual to lessons. They are respectful of each other and of adults.
- Pupils generally have positive attitudes to learning. Most are attentive and work well together. Teachers deal effectively with the rare occasions when pupils become distracted or distract others.
- Overall attendance is improving and is broadly in line with the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is starting to improve. Pupils who have issues with attendance are now receiving support that is effective. Leaders are aware that this is an area that they still need to focus on and improve.
- The school regularly checks on the attendance and progress of pupils who attend alternative provisions. The school works closely with the alternative providers to try to find the 'best fit' of provision for each pupil. The school receives a report of pupils' progress from alternative providers every term.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The overall progress of pupils who left the school at the end of Year 11 in 2017 was broadly in line with the national average. However, they made less progress than pupils did in 2016. Progress in mathematics was significantly above average and has been since the previous inspection.
- Overall attainment in 2017 was broadly in line with the national average; however, pupils achieved, on average, two thirds of a grade better in mathematics than the national average.
- Current school information on pupils' progress shows that pupils at key stage 4 are

achieving well and are making good progress from their respective starting points across the curriculum, especially in mathematics. Pupils at risk of underachieving are identified early and effective intervention strategies are in place to support them.

- Key stage 3 pupils are making good or better progress, as shown by the school's assessment information. Assessments are quality assured internally and monitored by leaders. Checks of pupils' work in exercise books during the inspection confirmed that pupils make good progress from their starting points across the curriculum.
- Information on current pupils' progress shows that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving over time. At both key stages 3 and 4, differences between the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and those of their peers are diminishing. This is due to the renewed focus on these pupils and higher expectations of what they can achieve.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive effective support to meet their targets. From their starting points, they make progress which is broadly in line with that of other pupils. Leaders are aware that there are a small number of pupils who have multiple learning needs who are not making as much progress as their peers.
- The careers guidance pupils receive is very effective and allows them to make informed choices regarding their future pathways. Last year, the number of pupils who went on to further education, employment or training was high.
- The small number of pupils who are placed in appropriate off-site, alternative provision are offered a curriculum that meets their needs and prepares them for their next steps in education, training or employment. However, their progress is not as strong as that of their peers in the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership and management of the sixth form are strong and leaders have created a new sixth form with an ethos based on high expectations. The numbers of students attending the sixth form is increasing every year.
- The levels of achievement in 2017 was below the national average, but progress of current students is good. Monitoring of students' progress is secure. Leaders ensure that each student is tracked carefully, and interventions are effective.
- The 16 to 19 study programme meets requirements and students benefit from an impressive variety of enrichment activities, ranging from a medics club to a weekly club for elderly residents. Students take part in a well-planned and structured tutorial programme, including the 'power hour' that prepares them well to move on to the next stage of their learning.
- Attendance and retention of sixth-form students from Year 12 to 13 is high and recruitment into the sixth form from Year 11 is increasing.
- Relationships between staff and students are very positive. Students said that the sixth form provides a perfect balance between support and independence. They are taught to be independent learners.
- Careers education, information and guidance are strong. In 2017, all students went on to higher education, employment or training. Students value the high-quality and

independent advice they receive as well as appropriate work experience.

- Students in the sixth form take on a wide range of leadership roles within the school, such as mentoring younger pupils and supporting weaker readers with their reading.
- Students told inspectors that they feel safe and are fully supported at the school.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. The vast majority of lessons are well planned and challenge students. Work in folders is, on the whole, well presented, organised and well written. Students are interested in learning and respond well to their teachers' feedback. Past inconsistencies in teaching have been addressed and teachers are starting to work with other schools to ensure that their assessments are moderated for accuracy.

School details

Unique reference number	136994
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10048271

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,378
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	144
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Annette Scott
Headteacher	Dr Janette Smith
Telephone number	0121 704 2146
Website	www.alderbrook.solihull.sch.uk/
Email address	office@alderbrook.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 January 2014

Information about this school

- Alderbrook School converted to academy status in August 2011. Governance is provided by a local governing body.
- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those who have an education, health and care plan, is well above the national average.

- A small number of pupils attend off-site alternative provision provided by Solihull local authority, either at the Triple Crown Centre or through ESCOS.
- Alderbrook hosts two additional resource centres for Solihull local authority. These cater for students with speech and language impairment and autism spectrum conditions. Pupils may initially receive full-time support in the resource base, increasing their access to mainstream provision over time as appropriate to the pupils' needs, achieving at least 50% mainstream inclusion by or before year 9.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 64 lessons, some of which were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work from a range of subjects in key stages 3 and 4, as well as in the sixth form.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and groups of pupils from across all years. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and with the deputy director of Solihull local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime, between lessons and after school.
- Inspectors took into account 171 parental responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, met with one parent and received correspondence from three others.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 100 members of staff who responded to the questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a variety of documentation (including the school's own self-evaluation of its provision), and considered information relating to achievement, teaching and learning, behaviour and attendance, safeguarding and governance.

Inspection team

Lois Kelly, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Antony Edkins	Ofsted Inspector
Bernice Astling	Ofsted Inspector
Russell Hinton	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Considine	Ofsted Inspector
Huw Bishop	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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