

Inspection of a good school: Alder Community High School

Mottram Old Road, Gee Cross, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 5NJ

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 October 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of Alder Community High School. They know the Alder values of altruism, leadership, diversity, excellence and resilience very well. Pupils try hard to follow them in all that they do. They told inspectors that these Alder values help to make the school a safe and happy place to be.

Pupils are tolerant of others' different beliefs and values. Pupils benefit from strong relationships with members of staff. They are confident that they can approach their teachers for help if they have a problem. On the rare occasions when bullying happens, leaders act quickly to stop it.

The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around school. The corridors are busy but ordered when pupils and staff move from lesson to lesson. Once lessons begin, a calm atmosphere descends and learning quickly resumes in the classrooms.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils. They ensure that pupils study a well-planned and suitably ambitious curriculum. However, in some subjects, the curriculum is not delivered consistently well. This means that some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not progress through the curriculum as well as they should.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are encouraged by leaders to take part in extra-curricular activities. Staff offer a wide range of activities to suit pupils' interests. Pupils of all ages benefit from an ambitious programme of careers education, advice and guidance.

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

There have been several recent changes within the school's leadership team. Leaders and governors have handled this period of transition well. They have reviewed the curriculum across the full range of subjects to ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, have access to learning that is broad and ambitious. Leaders are successfully increasing the proportion of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

Subject leaders, with the support of their senior leaders, have designed their curriculums well. Subject curriculums identify precisely the key knowledge that pupils need to know. The curriculums help pupils to build up their knowledge in a logical way. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to think deeply about social and moral issues, alongside learning the necessary subject knowledge.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use this knowledge to provide clear explanations to pupils about new learning. However, in some lessons, teachers do not choose the most appropriate activities to help pupils understand specific subject concepts. This is especially the case for those pupils who find learning more difficult, including pupils with SEND.

Teachers use effective strategies to check that pupils have learned the intended curriculum. In most lessons, teachers check that pupils understand key knowledge. The majority of teachers provide helpful feedback so that pupils know if they are doing well and how they can do even better.

Around the school, pupils are typically well-mannered and try hard to meet the high expectations that staff have for them. Lessons take place with little disruption. Pupils told inspectors that when there is poor behaviour, staff deal with it consistently and effectively.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. Leaders are currently in the process of refining how they support pupils with SEND to access the curriculum successfully. Recently, leaders have strengthened the information that they share with teachers about these pupils' specific needs. This is to help teachers to address these needs more precisely. However, some teachers do not use this information well enough to adapt the delivery of subject curriculums for these pupils. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should in some subjects.

Leaders have put effective systems in place to identify those pupils whose reading knowledge is weak when they join the school. These pupils benefit from dedicated time to improve their reading. Most become more confident readers. Leaders have developed some imaginative strategies to encourage reading for pleasure. These strategies are beginning to encourage younger pupils to read more widely and often.

Pupils follow a very well-planned personal development curriculum. This provides them with the knowledge and skills that they need to become active and informed citizens. Important issues such as sexual health and sexual harassment are effectively covered in the curriculum. Pupils learn about financial matters and the British political and legal systems. Pupils are very well informed about the dangers of illegal drugs and alcohol abuse. Pupils told

inspectors that the careers education and advice that they receive prepares them very well for making decisions about their future lives.

Staff appreciate how leaders protect them from an excessive workload. Governors know the school well. They hold leaders to account effectively and use their wide-ranging knowledge and skills to support the further development of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. Leaders provide regular safeguarding training to all staff. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Those responsible for safeguarding are knowledgeable and draw upon links with outside agencies when required.

Pupils are knowledgeable about the potential dangers that they may encounter in the community or online, due to the school's effective personal development curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not select the most appropriate activities to help pupils understand subject-specific concepts. This is especially the case for pupils who find the work more difficult. Leaders should ensure that teachers have the pedagogical knowledge to select the most appropriate activities which will enable all pupils to improve their subject-specific knowledge.
- Leaders are currently in the process of refining how they support pupils with SEND to access the curriculum successfully. At present, some staff do not support these pupils well enough. As a result, some pupils with SEND currently do not achieve as highly as they should in some subjects. Leaders should ensure that teachers deepen their knowledge of how to tailor their pedagogy to meet these pupils' individual needs effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2014.

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](#)' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	134283
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10240504
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	936
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Houghton
Headteacher	Richard O'Regan
Website	www.aldercommunityhighschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Two new deputy headteachers took up post in September 2022.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at two registered providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school
- Inspectors held meetings with governors, the headteacher, other senior leaders and some subject leaders.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and with the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority. Inspectors spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe. Inspectors also asked the pupils how they keep themselves safe and what to do if they have concerns.

- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from different year groups and considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of the parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with the subject leader to discuss the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors also reviewed curriculums from some other subjects.

Inspection team

Timothy Gartside, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Amina Modan

His Majesty’s Inspector

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