

Inspection of a good school: Astley Community High School

Elsdon Avenue, Seaton Delaval, Northumberland NE25 0BP

Inspection dates:

5–6 November 2019

Outcome

Astley Community High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that they are very proud of their school. They struggle to think of anything they would want to improve about it. One pupil said, 'There are too many good things and I would not have time to tell you about them all.' Staff and school leaders care deeply about the pupils and have high expectations of them. This is an inclusive school. Relationships in classrooms are excellent. Teachers say that they love working here because they can really teach.

Pupils feel safe here. There is little bullying. If bullying does happen, pupils are confident that it will be swiftly sorted out. Pupils have a range of staff to talk to if they have a problem. They say that their health, including mental health needs, are a priority. Pupils say that they make friends quickly when they join the school.

Pupils are keen to collect merits, which are rewards for doing well. They have a full understanding of the system for rewards and sanctions. They consider the prizes on offer to be good. Pupils speak highly of 'hot chocolate with the head' and enjoy attending it.

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

In Year 9, pupils study a broad curriculum and opt for GCSEs towards the end of this year. Leaders base the curriculum on the national curriculum. Leaders have begun a curriculum review. This is ensuring that curriculum leaders and staff are making careful choices. They are thinking about what pupils need to know beyond the academic subjects they are taught. Teaching supports the curriculum well because teachers have good subject knowledge. Some subjects have a curriculum leader who is not a subject specialist. The executive headteacher has set up some links with other schools to support when this is the case.

There are a wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer to pupils. Many pupils take part in these and leaders check who is attending. The pupil premium leader is arranging

visits and activities for disadvantaged pupils. This is to improve their life chances. The school are particularly proud of some of their sporting achievements. An example of this is girls' rugby.

Over the past two years, the numbers of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) have been low. This is mainly due to low numbers of pupils selecting GCSE French in the past. The numbers of pupils now choosing French are increasing every year. The executive headteacher supports this. He is reviewing staffing in languages with governors. This is to support an extra GCSE French class in the future. The school aims to increase the numbers achieving EBacc this year and beyond.

Pupils' achievement in some subjects, such as English, has been more secure than in mathematics, for example. Curriculum leaders have evaluated why this is the case and have clear plans to address this. This is already beginning to help pupils. They now have more time dedicated to practising and embedding their learning in mathematics.

Low-level disruption is not tolerated in the school. Pupils say that teachers deal with any incidents quickly. This means that pupils' learning is not disrupted. Behaviour records in school show that this is the case.

Pupils are polite and courteous and very welcoming to visitors. They are proud of their school and keen to talk about their successes. Pupils have high expectations for themselves.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well cared for in the school. The special educational needs coordinator ensures that teachers know how to support pupils and meet their needs. She checks how well this happens in lessons. Pupils with SEND study the same curriculum as others. Teachers and teaching assistants help them to access it. One parent described the SEND team as amazing.

Leaders are mindful of staff well-being. Staff say that they are often consulted about changes that may happen in school. Staff say that their workload is manageable. If they feel that workload is becoming too much, they can approach leaders for support. The majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are happy with the school. They say that their children are happy here. They also say that the school is well led and managed. One parent said, 'I hold the staff and the school in high regard.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead is meticulous and thorough in his record-keeping. He knows pupils exceptionally well. He works effectively with a wide range of external agencies. This ensures that pupils receive the help and support they need. He is persistent to ensure that the right outcomes are achieved.

There are clear systems in place for staff to refer pupils if they are worried or concerned about them. Staff know the importance of sharing this information. The school is seen as a beacon of effective safeguarding practice and is invited to share this with other schools.

During the inspection, leaders carried out some safeguarding checks. These were about pupils attending alternative provision. Pupils were found to be safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders should continue to work on developing the curriculum further, including support for curriculum leaders who are non-specialists. This is to ensure that the good practice that is in place in this first term continues across all terms and year groups so that pupils' knowledge extends beyond academic and vocational requirements.
- Further work to support and encourage pupils to gain the EBacc qualification is required. This is so that leaders can build on the improvements they have made with the numbers of pupils choosing to study French at GCSE. This is also so that the school continues to work towards the government target of 75% of pupils achieving the EBacc qualification.
- Leaders should carefully evaluate the strategies that they have implemented to improve pupils' attendance. Following this, there should be further work to continue to refine what leaders do, for example looking at how to support pupils whose attendance is not the lowest, but could improve further.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Astley Community High School to be good on 13 to 14 January 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	122374
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10087644
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	527
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mrs Susan Dungworth
Headteacher	Mr John Barnes (Executive headteacher), Mr Graham Scott (Head of school)
Website	www.svf.org.uk/astley-community-high-school .
Date of previous inspection	13–14 January 2016

Information about this school

- The school is in a hard federation with Seaton Sluice and Whytrig middle schools. The three schools share the governing body and the executive headteacher.
- The school shares its senior leadership team and some teaching staff with Whytrig Middle School, which is based on the same school site.
- The school uses four alternative education providers; these are Skills 4 U, Choysez, Total Tuition and the local authority EOTAS provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school and other senior and middle leaders. A meeting was held with the designated safeguarding lead.

- The subjects that were looked at in detail included mathematics, English and French. These 'deep dives' included visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, talking to pupils about their work and talking to teachers about their lessons. Curriculum leaders and senior leaders were also spoken with about the curriculum in these and other subjects.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils, staff, governors and school leaders about safeguarding. Safeguarding records and training were scrutinised and a visit to alternative provision was made.

Inspection team

Debbie Redshaw, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Wilson

Ofsted Inspector

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