

Inspection of a good school: Alder Grange School

Calder Road, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancashire BB4 8HW

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 January 2022

Outcome

Alder Grange School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, told inspectors that they enjoy coming to Alder Grange School. It is a happy and safe place where pupils trust staff. Adults take the time to get to know pupils well. Staff set, and share, high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement.

Pupils are punctual to lessons. They concentrate well on their work. Pupils also behave well and have fun during social times. They enjoy positive relationships with one another. Pupils are confident to report any concerns about harmful behaviour, including bullying, because staff resolve such issues quickly and effectively.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum. They achieve well overall. This includes most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. Students in the sixth form receive an especially strong quality of education.

Leaders make sure that all pupils and students can take part in a wide range of clubs and activities that inspire and interest them. For example, pupils and students perform in music and drama productions. Pupils willingly take on leadership responsibilities. They are keen to be engaged in charity work.

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

Leaders and governors have high ambitions for all pupils. Most pupils and students, including those with SEND, achieve well across a range of subjects.

Leaders have broadened the range of subjects that they offer to pupils. They have also strengthened the modern foreign languages curriculum in key stage 3. This has increased the number of pupils who choose to study this subject at key stage 4. As a result, the proportion of pupils following the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects is rising.

Most subject leaders are clear about the essential knowledge that pupils need to cover through the subject curriculums. These curriculums are well organised. They include opportunities for pupils to remember, practise and build on what they already know. Pupils progress well through these subject curriculums.

The curriculums in a minority of subjects do not pay enough attention to the knowledge that pupils require or the order in which this should be taught. This hampers pupils' achievement in a small number of subjects.

Many teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use their subject expertise well to help pupils remember and apply the essential knowledge that they have been taught. Most teachers also use assessment strategies adeptly. They spot and address pupils' misconceptions quickly and effectively. This helps pupils to move on to new learning confidently and successfully.

Teachers' strong subject expertise in the sixth form helps students progress through their subject curriculums especially well. These students are prepared well for their next steps in education, employment and training after sixth form. The majority of students progress on to university courses. Other students follow suitable apprenticeships that enable them to make a positive start to their future career.

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, read regularly and fluently. Leaders accurately identify pupils who find reading more difficult. They provide a curriculum that makes sure that these pupils catch up quickly. This means that these pupils read confidently and can access their learning in other subjects.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. Teachers provide effective support so that pupils with SEND enjoy success.

Pupils behave well in lessons. They listen and contribute. Pupils' positive attitudes to school mean that they can learn without disruption.

The personal development curriculum provides pupils with the knowledge that they need to be responsible citizens. This includes age-appropriate relationships, sex and health education.

Older pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from a strong careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) programme. However, younger pupils told inspectors that their careers curriculum is less effective. For example, leaders have not ensured that pupils in key stage 3 have enough information when considering which subjects to study in key stage 4.

Staff told inspectors that leaders support their well-being and workload effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are clear about the dangers that pupils and students in the sixth form may face in or outside of school. This includes peer-on-peer abuse. Staff are vigilant and alert to the signs that pupils are at risk of harm.

Pupils are confident to seek help from staff when they need it. Staff report concerns about pupils in a timely manner. They quickly identify whether pupils require additional support from external agencies. Leaders ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of subjects, the curriculum lacks clarity about the important subject content that pupils should know and the order in which it should be taught. This means that, in these subjects, some pupils find it more difficult to build the rich body of knowledge that they need to progress well. Leaders should agree and organise what all pupils need to learn in these subjects so that pupils achieve well.
- The careers information that leaders provide for younger pupils is insufficient. Pupils in key stage 3 do not receive enough information to help them to make informed choices when choosing their GCSE courses. Leaders should review the CEIAG programme for younger pupils so that these pupils receive relevant information at appropriate times.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2017.

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.

If you are the school and 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	119722
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10212507
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	846
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lesley Doherty
Headteacher	Joanna Griffiths
Website	www.aldergrange.com
Date of previous inspection	14 and 15 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at five external providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection 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 the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of Lancashire County Council.

- 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 learn how to keep themselves safe and what to do if they have any concerns.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all 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, geography and science.
- Inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and looked at samples of pupils' work from some other subjects.

Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Claire Hollister

Ofsted Inspector

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