Inspection of Alderwood School

Belle Vue Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU12 4RZ

Inspection dates:	15 and 16 October 2024
The quality of education	**Requires improvement**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Requires improvement**
Early years provision	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to Alderwood School. There is a strong sense of community here, and one that is fully inclusive of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils across the age ranges know how to treat each other with kindness, and relationships between staff and pupils are positive and warm. Pupils behave well and bullying is rare. Where it does occur, pupils are confident in staff's ability to deal with it swiftly.

Pupils relish the leadership opportunities available to them, including being representatives on the school council, acting as prefects, 'new arrival ambassadors' and 'buddies' for younger readers. They are proud to hold these responsibilities and contribute to the life of their school.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils to do well and 'be the best they can be'. These ambitions are realised fully in the primary phase, where pupils achieve particularly well. Pupils are keen to share what they have learned, and they remember this learning well over time. However, this is not the case in the secondary phase, where pupils' recall is more variable. Here, pupils do not achieve well enough and, while there has been work by the school to tackle this, it has not yet made enough of a difference to what pupils know and remember.

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

Across the school, a thoughtfully planned curriculum builds from the early years upwards. Staff subject knowledge is strong, and most pupils benefit from clear explanations. Across the primary phase, including in the Reception year, staff check carefully on what pupils have understood, or where further support is needed. Adaptations are then made rapidly, so that misunderstandings do not persist. However, this same practice is not as precise in the senior phase. Here, gaps in learning are not identified as rapidly, meaning that staff do not have the same accurate overview of what pupils have understood. As a result, some misunderstandings persist, and pupils move on to new learning before key building blocks are secure. While the school has worked to develop the curriculum, older pupils are not consistently supported well to remember intended learning longer term. While pupils in the primary phase are well prepared, secondary age pupils are not yet sufficiently well prepared for their next stages in learning.

There is a well-considered phonics programme in place. Staff are well trained in its delivery, meaning that pupils who join the school who are not fluent readers are supported to develop these essential skills. As pupils go through the school, those who struggle to read with confidence are supported by older pupils who are trained to act as reading 'buddies'. This work impacts positively on the pupils that need this support.

Pupils with SEND have their needs identified rapidly on entry to the school. As a result, staff have the information they need to adapt the learning in lessons so that, on the whole, these pupils access the same curriculum as their peers across the school. For

those with more significant needs, the school has taken effective steps to develop extra provision, which is well matched to these needs.

Behaviour across the school is generally very settled and calm. In the primary phase, pupils are readily engaged with their learning, and treat one another well. In the secondary phase, the school's work to develop its calm and purposeful learning environment has reaped rewards. The school provides effective support to any pupils who struggle to meet the school's high expectations for behaviour. Similarly, the school's work to support those who do not attend well has also shown marked improvements. A range of tailored support is provided to ensure that all pupils attend increasingly well over time.

Lessons in personal, social, health and economic education are well linked with a pastoral programme and assemblies. These work well together to develop well-rounded pupils. Pupils are clear that all are welcome in their school community, regardless of difference. An effective careers programme is also in place to support pupils in considering their options when they leave school.

Leaders have worked to identify and start to address the areas needing development. Work around behaviour and attendance shows marked improvements, demonstrating the positive impact of leaders' actions. But work to address the weaknesses in pupil achievement in the senior school has not been effective enough. Leaders recognise the need to address this with greater urgency. However some of this newer work is in its early stages, and the school does not have effective systems in place to ensure that actions to improve what older pupils know and remember in the secondary phase are having the impact leaders intend.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment and checks on pupil understanding in the senior school are not as precise as they need to be. This means that staff do not always have an accurate understanding of what pupils have understood or pick up on subject-specific misconceptions quickly enough. The school needs to develop their assessment practices so that staff can identify what pupils know and where they need to adapt their input accordingly, to support pupils in doing well.
- Staff in the senior school do not consistently support pupils in knowing more and remembering more over time. Leaders need to ensure that pupils are supported in recalling their learning in the long term, to lead to more effective outcomes for all pupils.

- The steps taken to improve what pupils know, remember and how well they achieve in the senior school have not been effective enough. The school needs to ensure that leaders at all levels have robust systems for monitoring and evaluating their work, to assure themselves that the steps taken are having the impact they intend and pupils are supported in achieving well.

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

Unique reference number	116234
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10341425
Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1515
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Headteacher	Clare de Sausmarez (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.alderwood.hants.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school operates across three separate sites: an infant site; a junior site and a senior site.
- The school currently uses three forms of alternative provision, all of which are unregistered.
- 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began.
- The inspection team held meetings with the executive headteacher, the heads of school for the primary and senior schools, senior leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector met with the members of the governing body, including the vice chair of governors. The lead inspector also held a meeting online with representatives from the local authority.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages, physical education and art. 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 visited lessons from some other taught subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- An inspector held telephone conversations with staff at the alternative provisions used by the school.
- The inspection team took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- The team spoke with pupils about their experience of the school. They took account of parent and carer and staff views through conversations and responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Marian Feeley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Louise Agley	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Carlyle	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Old	His Majesty's Inspector
Owen McColgan	Ofsted Inspector

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