

Inspection of Alt Bridge School

Wellcroft Road, Huyton, Liverpool, Merseyside L36 7TA

Inspection dates: 11 to 12 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 13 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at that time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love being a part of Alt Bridge School. Strong relationships between staff and pupils are pivotal to the success of this school. Pastoral care is exemplary, and pupils feel happy and safe. This is because pupils know that staff care for them and will support them with any worries that they may have.

The school provides a plethora of exciting opportunities that develop pupils' character. For example, pupils join in a vast array of outdoor activities, and they gain many life skills and awards. In addition, pupils work closely with members of the local community. This work contributes considerably to developing pupils' communication skills. Similarly, pupils are exceedingly proud of the work that they do around equality. Many pupils relish being part of the equalities team. They explained that the work they do supports the well-being of their fellow classmates.

Pupils behave well. Around the school and in lessons, pupils conduct themselves appropriately. They follow the school's well-established routines. Pupils' behaviour does not disrupt learning in lessons. When needed, staff support pupils to help them regulate their own behaviour. Pupils learn in a calm and orderly environment.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement across a range of subjects. Pupils respond well to these expectations. In many subjects, pupils achieve highly. The curriculum in the sixth form is incredibly well designed. Sixth-form students flourish.

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

The school is aspirational for pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Since the previous inspection, the school has overhauled the curriculum to increase its breadth and depth. The school has ensured that the curriculum is successfully designed around the individual needs of pupils.

Within each curriculum area, the school has carefully identified the knowledge that pupils should learn over time. The school has organised this learning effectively. This ensures that pupils improve their knowledge of the topics that they are studying. In the sixth form, the curriculum is excellent. Students develop a deep understanding of subject content. They are exceedingly well prepared for adulthood.

Teachers have in-depth knowledge of the subjects that they teach. This is especially true in the sixth form. In key stages 3 and 4, teachers use this expertise to design learning activities that enable pupils to learn effectively. In the sixth form, teachers are adept at designing learning resources to enable students to excel.

Typically, in key stages 3 and 4, teachers use assessment strategies well to establish what pupils know and remember about the curriculum. In the main, teachers use this information to inform subsequent learning. However, in a few curriculum areas, the school's assessment strategies are underdeveloped. On occasion, in these

subject areas, some teachers do not identify the gaps in pupils' learning sufficiently well. In contrast, assessment in the sixth form is highly effective. It is tailored so that teachers meticulously identify the next steps in students' learning.

The school makes reading a central priority across the curriculum, including in the sixth form. Pupils' attitudes to reading have improved considerably. There is a love of reading at the school. Pupils read high-quality texts. The school chooses texts with care to ensure that the books pupils study expand their understanding of different cultures.

Pupils respond well to the high expectations set out by the school for their behaviour. In lessons, pupils display positive attitudes towards their learning. With support when needed, pupils maintain focus and concentrate on the task at hand. They are keen to take part in lessons. In the sixth form, students' behaviour is exemplary.

The curriculum for pupils' personal development is impressive. The school provides every pupil with the opportunities that they require to become active citizens in modern Britain, including a vast array of extra-curricular activities. Pupils develop a deep understanding of the importance of tolerance. This includes people who may be different from themselves. For example, pupils learn in depth about religious diversity. The way that the school promotes pupils' physical and mental health is striking. Pupils develop a secure understanding of how negative relationships can affect both their physical and mental health.

Governors and leaders have a clear oversight of the quality of education that pupils receive. They provide staff with an appropriate programme of ongoing training and development, including on curriculum design. Staff reported that leaders' decisions about how the curriculum is implemented have positively impacted on their workload.

Typically, the school engages well with parents and carers. For example, parents appreciate the additional parents' evening that the school now offers. However, a minority of parents feel that they do not receive enough information about their child's learning and progress through the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of subjects, the school's assessment systems are underdeveloped. On occasion, this hinders how well staff identify the next steps in pupils' learning.

Leaders should ensure that in these subjects, assessment systems enable staff to identify and address the gaps in pupils' learning.

- The school does not communicate with a minority of parents as effectively as it could. This means that some parents do not feel that they are adequately informed about their child's learning in school. Leaders should ensure that parents are fully informed about how their child is achieving at school.

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	104498
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10277657
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	287
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Steve Dixon
Headteacher	Natalie Menagh
Website	www.altbridgeschool.com
Dates of previous inspection	10 to 11 September 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with autism and moderate learning difficulties. The school is increasingly catering for pupils with severe learning difficulties.
- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provider.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- There have been several changes to staff, including in leadership roles, since the previous inspection.
- The number of pupils who attend the school has increased since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, physical education, art and design, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked with pupils and staff and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' education, health and care plans. They reviewed documentation relating to pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders to discuss pupils' rates of attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. He also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes and during their snack time. They scrutinised leaders' records of behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school development plan and the school's self-evaluation document.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Stuart Perkins, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lindy Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Edmondson	Ofsted Inspector

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