

Inspection of a good school: Alvechurch CofE Middle School

Birmingham Road, Alvechurch, Birmingham, West Midlands B48 7TA

Inspection dates: 28–29 January 2020

Outcome

Alvechurch CofE Middle School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's curriculum is broad, stimulating and extends well beyond the classroom. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their sporting and musical talents. For example, during the inspection several pupils took part in the Young Voices festival.

Pupils learn how to take responsibility and to lead. The school fulfils its ambition to make sure that its pupils have the attitudes and the range of knowledge to be 'high-school ready'. Leaders and governors are determined that this is an inclusive school that welcomes all. The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pastoral care is exceptionally strong. Staff treat the pupils as individuals. They have taken the initiative in talking with pupils about their mental health and emotional well-being. Bullying is very rare, pupils feel safe and really enjoy school. They are articulate, look smart, and behave very well in the classroom and the playground.

Leaders have high expectations for staff and pupils alike. They know what works well, and where learning can be strengthened further. Leaders make most effective use of the Bromsgrove Middle School Partnership to extend their own thinking and to provide training for staff.

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

Subject leaders plan learning well, so that it builds upon what pupils already know and can do. Teachers ensure that pupils learn the important knowledge and skills underlying each subject, such as the design process in design technology. Pupils are clear about what teachers expect of them. Teachers check on what pupils have learned, both in the short and the longer term. This means that teachers can amend their plans accordingly. Pupils learn the importance of adding to their existing understanding and being able to retrieve the knowledge later. Teachers across the school know their subjects very well. They use the correct subject-specific terms and recognise the importance of pupils

learning and understanding the key vocabulary for each topic. Pupils benefit from being able to use appropriate resources of a high quality in subjects like design technology and music.

Teachers adapt the learning well for pupils of differing abilities. In music, for example, teaching draws on pupils' instrumental expertise to stretch those who are capable of more complex work. Occasionally, the work given to those who grasp ideas quickly does not challenge them to think more deeply. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to support pupils with additional needs, although the effectiveness with which they do this varies a little.

In English, pupils craft their writing well because teachers help them to see how editing can improve it. New incentives have encouraged pupils to read more widely. Teachers choose demanding texts to study in class.

In mathematics, pupils learn to perform calculations fluently, apply their learning and reason mathematically. They appreciate investigative work. This challenges them to think hard and embeds their learning. Leaders have recently introduced the use of practical equipment to help pupils to visualise ideas.

Pupils are enthusiastic and constructive in their approach to their studies. In part, this is because classroom activities are varied and interesting. They also respond well to the school's system of rewards. Pupils' workbooks show that they often reflect well on how they can improve their work. Just occasionally, pupils might use more initiative if they are stuck in class.

Leaders and governors plan very effectively for pupils' broader development. Through subjects such as religious education and music, pupils are introduced to a range of different cultures. They respect people from different backgrounds. Pupils have an impressive range of opportunities to care for others and develop their own skills. For example, during the inspection I saw able Year 8 pupils helping Year 6 mathematicians. They demonstrated considerable patience, knowledge and skill.

Most staff appreciate the steps that leaders have taken to manage their workload, for example by reorganising parent consultation evenings so that less time is wasted.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know pupils very well and go out of their way to help them when they need it. Pupils have full confidence in the staff and approach them if they have a difficulty or need additional support. Leaders ensure that all staff are well trained to identify any risks to pupils' safety or well-being. Specialist staff, such as those trained in mental health, provide additional expertise. Records show that when the need arises, leaders take the right steps to involve other agencies that work with children.

Leaders make the necessary checks on the staff who join the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- To date, leaders have not secured sufficient consistency in the quality of education for provision to be outstanding. Occasionally, pupils' workbooks show that they have not grasped all the ideas that they could and should have done. Sometimes pupils complete too much routine work or teachers do not extend the thinking of those who finish quickly. Sometimes staff do not tailor work carefully enough for pupils with additional needs. Subject leaders know where teachers' day-to-day planning or classroom practice is strong and where it could be strengthened further. Leaders should continue their work to promote high standards in all classes and subjects.

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 the predecessor school, Alvechurch CofE Middle School, to be good on 13–14 September 2012.

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 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	143507
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10122513
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	437
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gwen Onyon
Headteacher	David Snell
Website	http://www.alvechurchmiddle.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Alvechurch CofE Middle School converted to become an academy on 1 April 2017. It is the only school in Alvechurch CofE Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).
- The school runs a breakfast and an after-school club.
- The school is a Church of England faith school. Its religious character was last inspected in February 2019.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Before the inspection, we reviewed the information on the school's website and spoke to the headteacher on the telephone about the school and its curriculum.
- We conducted deep dives into English, mathematics, design technology and music. We held discussions with leaders, visited lessons, held meetings with staff, looked at examples of pupils' work and had discussions with pupils.

- We took account of 76 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire for parents. We also considered 61 free-text comments. We spoke with parents at the start of the second day of the inspection. We read some items of correspondence.
- We considered the 28 responses to the staff survey. We also spoke to staff about their professional development and their support from leaders.
- We spoke to pupils in lessons and at social times about their experiences at school.
- We checked the school’s employment records and met with the deputy headteacher who leads safeguarding. We met with the special educational needs coordinator and briefly visited lessons with her.
- We met with the chair and four other members of the governing body. The chair and one of the other governors are also trustees of the MAT.
- We met with a national leader in education who works closely with the school. We spoke on the telephone with a representative of the Diocese of Worcester.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Clare Considine

Ofsted Inspector

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