

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Astley Community High School

Elsdon Avenue, Seaton Delaval, Northumberland NE25 0BP

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 December 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Astley Community High School is a close-knit community where pupils are safe and happy. Pupils are proud to attend the school and enjoy positive relationships with staff. The school has high expectations for pupils. Staff know pupils well. Pupils are regarded as individuals. Pastoral care is strong.

Pupils conduct themselves well. They greet visitors warmly and demonstrate excellent manners. The school is calm and orderly. In lessons, pupils work hard and listen carefully to their teachers. At social times, pupils mix well together. Sixth-form students are positive role models for younger pupils.

Pupils do not routinely benefit from effective practice in relation to improving their reading and ensuring that gaps in their knowledge are identified and addressed. As a result, some pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they should.

The school is committed to pupils' wider development. Pupils develop their independence and resilience by taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award. They pursue their interests and talents by taking part in a range of clubs, such as performing arts, sport and crafts. Pupils experience trips and visits to support their understanding of the curriculum. For example, pupils have recently visited local universities and museums to develop their understanding of what they have learned in English and history.

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

There is a broad and ambitious curriculum on offer at the school. It is sequenced and designed effectively to ensure that pupils can build their knowledge. The school promotes

the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects to all pupils. However, the proportion of pupils taking the EBacc remains well below national averages. There is a range of qualifications and subjects for students in the sixth form to choose from.

The curriculum is delivered by subject specialists who explain concepts clearly. Pupils receive the appropriate support and resources to help them produce high-quality work. Teachers usually ask effective questions to encourage pupils to think deeply. In sixth-form lessons, students work with high levels of independence.

In some subjects, there are some inconsistencies in how teachers check pupils have learned and understood the curriculum securely. On occasions, this means they do not identify that pupils' understanding is superficial or they have gaps in their knowledge.

As a highly inclusive school, staff have the same high ambition for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) as they do for all other pupils. The support for pupils with SEND is effective. The school accurately identifies pupils' needs. Staff receive training and detailed information about pupils' needs so that they can adapt learning for pupils with SEND. Pupils who access the additionally resourced provision integrate with their peers, and the school supports them well.

The school is aware that some pupils who are at the earliest stages of reading are not receiving the support they need, and this is limiting how well these pupils can access the curriculum. The school's plans to introduce a programme of support for these pupils is in its infancy. Reading for pleasure has a high profile. Teachers share their recommendations with pupils. The school dedicates time during the week for reading for pleasure.

There is a robust approach to tracking attendance. Leaders identify the barriers to pupils' regular attendance, and they work with families to overcome these issues. While there is still some work to do to ensure that attendance improves further, the school's recent work is having a positive impact.

The school has a carefully planned curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health education. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. Pupils are proud that they attend a tolerant school, where everyone is accepted for who they are. In the sixth form, students learn how to manage finances and debate sensitive issues from the media. Pupils play an active part in the school community in roles such as 'sports leaders' and prefects. Sixth-form students take on the roles of 'senior students'.

Pupils benefit from an effective careers programme. Pupils engage in a range of careers visits and workshops. Former pupils often return to the school to share their experiences. Pupils receive careers advice that helps them to make informed decisions about their next steps when they leave school.

Staff say they feel supported by leaders. They appreciate the ways that their well-being and workload are prioritised. Skilled and knowledgeable governors understand and fulfil

their duties. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school is diligent about keeping pupils safe and takes timely and appropriate actions to do so. However, some internal safeguarding records do not currently capture and reflect the effective actions that the school has taken to keep children safe. Leaders are fully committed to strengthening this aspect of the school's record-keeping.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are some inconsistencies in the ways teachers check what pupils have learned, understood and remembered. This means that, at times, they do not identify or address misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should ensure that teachers check pupils' knowledge and understanding to ensure that gaps in knowledge are consistently identified and filled, so that pupils embed their knowledge and achieve more.
- The weakest readers, including those at the early stages of reading, are not currently getting the support that they need. This means they are not able to access the curriculum as well as they should. The school must ensure that a comprehensive programme of support is implemented to teach, assess and monitor the progress of the weakest readers in the school.
- Some safeguarding records do not reflect the actions that the school has taken to keep pupils safe. As a result, the school is not consistently able to review the actions taken and their impact. The school should ensure that all safeguarding records consistently include sufficient detail about the follow-up actions that are taken to keep pupils safe.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the

last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in 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 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	122374
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10346372
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
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	605
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Susan Dungworth
Headteacher	John Barnes (Executive Headteacher) and Richard Goodman (Head of School)
Website	www.svf.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has an additionally resourced provision on site. It provides support for pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- A small number of pupils access alternative provision. The school uses two registered alternative provisions.
- 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

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, head of school and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors focused inspection activity on the following subjects: English, mathematics, business studies, travel and tourism, and information and communications technology. Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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' interest first.
- Throughout the inspection, inspectors met with groups of staff. They also considered the opinions expressed through Ofsted's online staff survey.
- The inspector took account of responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Dan McKeating, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Angela White

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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