

Inspection of Alder Community High School

Mottram Old Road, Gee Cross, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 5NJ

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 April 2024

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel well cared for in this school. They benefit from high-quality pastoral support. Some pupils spoke warmly about how staff help them to look after their mental well-being. A culture of care and compassion helps most pupils to feel happy in school.

Pupils are encouraged to make meaningful contributions to the school community. For example, the student council recently helped to review the school's anti-bullying policy. Pupils have an increasingly strong voice in the school. They value opportunities to work with staff to improve further their educational experience.

Most pupils conduct themselves sensibly. There is little disruption to lessons. When pupils' behaviour reflects the 'Alder values', staff give them points to spend in the school shop. Pupils particularly delight in being rewarded in this way.

Although published outcomes indicate that pupils typically attain well in national tests at the end of key stage 4, weaknesses in the curriculum mean that they do not build a broad and rich body of knowledge within each subject. Recently, the school has increased its expectations of pupils' achievement, particularly of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It has prioritised improving the quality of education that it provides. The school has a comprehensive understanding of what remains to be done.

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

There have been a number of changes in key personnel since the start of this academic year, including the headteacher. The school has focused on ensuring that leaders at all levels, including the governors, have the expertise and information that they need to fulfil their roles effectively. This has been successful. The school has sharply focused plans in place to develop the quality of education that it provides. It is implementing these at pace. Governors have reviewed their systems for gathering information about the school. They now have an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Governors are working closely with the school to make the rapid improvements that are needed.

The school has ensured that the curriculum is ambitious. Subject curriculums are well organised. In the main, the school has clearly identified the important knowledge that pupils should learn. Teachers frequently check what pupils have learned. However, at times, these checks do not match the important information outlined in the curriculum. In addition, some teachers do not use assessment strategies effectively. At times, they are unaware of the misconceptions or gaps that develop in pupils' knowledge.

Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. Typically, they explain new concepts clearly. However, at times, teachers' understanding of how to deliver the curriculum effectively is less secure. This means that on occasions, learning activities

do not help pupils to learn what the teacher intended. This includes strategies designed to help pupils to remember what they have learned over time. Consequently, some pupils' learning is uneven across the curriculum.

Recently, the school has taken swift and effective action to improve its provision for pupils with SEND. There is now a robust process in place to identify swiftly and accurately any additional needs that pupils may have. However, much of this work is in its infancy. There is variability in how effectively staff adapt the delivery of the curriculum to help these pupils to learn well. This means that some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should.

The school has a programme in place to support pupils who struggle with their reading. Currently, this is more robust for pupils in Year 7 than for those in other year groups. The school is in the process of ensuring that pupils of all ages receive highly effective support to help them to read well.

The school ensures that pupils are suitably prepared for life in modern society. Pupils experience a comprehensive programme of personal development which includes learning about healthy relationships and how to keep safe online. Typically, pupils remember this learning well.

Careers provision is a strength. Pupils benefit from carefully tailored opportunities to help them make informed choices about their next steps.

The atmosphere in the school is calm and orderly. Pupils are respectful to staff. A small number of pupils struggle to regulate their own behaviour. The school is taking thoughtful action to help these pupils and to ensure that staff are well equipped to support them. Most pupils attend school regularly.

Most staff are supportive of the momentum of change in the school. Although some have found the pace of this change challenging, others spoke appreciatively of the support that they are given to strengthen 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)

- Some staff do not check that pupils' prior learning is secure before moving on to new content. In addition, in some subjects, staff are not sufficiently clear about the knowledge to prioritise when checking what pupils have learned. As a result, some pupils develop misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge that staff do not address. The school should ensure that it supports staff in using assessment strategies consistently well and that they focus these on the key knowledge that

pupils should remember.

- Some staff do not have the teaching knowledge to deliver the curriculum as effectively as they should. A lack of understanding of the purpose of some learning activities, including those aimed at helping pupils to remember important knowledge over time, means that at times, pupils do not learn what staff intended. The school should ensure that staff receive training and guidance to enable them to deliver subject curriculums consistently well.
- Some staff do not adapt the delivery of the curriculum effectively enough to support pupils with SEND. This means that at times, these pupils do not learn as well as they should. The school should ensure that staff have the expertise to enable them to meet the needs of these pupils and to help them to achieve 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	134283
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10290143
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	923
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Houghton
Headteacher	Michelle Critchlow
Website	www.aldercommunityhighschool.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 October 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a number of new staff have joined the school, including senior and middle leaders. The headteacher has been in place since September 2023.
- The school uses three registered alternative provisions and one unregistered alternative provision for a very small number of pupils.
- 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- An inspector met with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and an educational consultant who works with the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, physical education and design and technology. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses shared through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and staff.
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation documents and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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.

Inspection team

Sally Rix, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Scott Maclean	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Meldrum	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Crawley	Ofsted Inspector

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