

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Aston Manor Academy

Phillips Street, Aston, Birmingham, West Midlands B6 4PZ

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 May 2025

Outcome

Aston Manor Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Jill Sweeney. This school is part of Equitas Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Alex Lofthouse, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jane Gotschel.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is an exceptional sense of community at Aston Manor Academy. Staff forge strong relationships with pupils and provide high-quality pastoral care. Pupils know that if they have any concerns, there is someone to turn to. This helps pupils to feel safe. Almost all parents and carers are highly positive about the school.

The school sets high expectations for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It has established a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour highly effectively. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school.

The curriculum is broad and ambitious. Learning in different subjects links well together and moves smoothly from one key stage to the next. Pupils learn well.

The school's values of 'all different, all equal, all achieving' drive its daily life. The school pays great attention to developing pupils' character, such as increasing their confidence. Pupils learn about different cultures and world events. The school uses links with other education providers and local organisations effectively. This helps ensure that careers education is a firm strength. Many pupils also take part in a range of clubs at lunchtime or after school. Students thrive in the sixth form.

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

The school has worked well to maintain high standards in all aspects of its work. It has overcome effectively and efficiently the challenge presented by the identification of aerated concrete on the site in 2023. The school's strategic actions are firmly based on the right steps to improve further. However, sometimes, staff's lack of clarity about these improvements affects the impact of these actions on classroom practice. Staff, including teachers new to the profession, believe that the school is considerate of their workload and always ready to listen to their views.

The school has designed an ambitious and broad curriculum. At key stage 3, pupils follow all the subjects in the national curriculum. The very large majority go on to follow a course leading to GCSEs in English, mathematics and science and either French, geography or history. A growing proportion study both French and a humanities subject.

Teachers ensure that day-to-day activities for pupils meet the longer-term aims of the curriculum. They have a secure grasp of their subjects and pay good attention to the different knowledge and skills that make up each subject. Teachers explain new ideas and concepts accurately and precisely so pupils build their knowledge in manageable steps. They design activities that include more detailed and challenging knowledge, and standards in the classroom are typically high. The school helps pupils remember important knowledge in the longer term.

Teachers check routinely and address any misconceptions effectively. This helps pupils to deepen their knowledge. The school uses the results from tests and examinations to check how well the curriculum is working and to make appropriate adaptations where necessary.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND accurately and provides clear guidance for staff on how best to meet them. Staff give effective support, for example using physical resources in mathematics to consolidate pupils' learning. In general, pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as their peers and learn well. The school identifies well those who join the school with weaker reading skills. It provides these pupils with extra help, so they catch up quickly.

Pupils' trust in the staff is at the heart of the school's success. They recognise that staff genuinely want the best for them. In response, pupils concentrate well in lessons and take a noticeable pride in their work. The school's behaviour system is implemented very effectively. This means that staff hardly ever have to use any sanctions in class. There is a positive and peaceful atmosphere around the school.

Staff know pupils and their families very well. They provide high-quality support for those experiencing difficulties, expertly drawing on help from other agencies. The school has implemented a comprehensive programme of personal development. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to stay safe. Pupils learn about the wider world and how to be positive citizens. Students in the sixth form greatly value the advice and guidance they receive.

The school goes to great lengths to help pupils and students in the sixth form find the right destinations and know how this motivates them in their work. Work experience opportunities and visits to colleges and universities contribute well to the programme. Staff provide additional careers opportunities for those who most need it. This means that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment.

The trust provides effective oversight of the school. Trustees help to forge productive links with other organisations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not always have a full understanding of the strategies and approaches the school is aiming to implement to improve classroom practice. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they might. The school should ensure that its strategic priorities to develop teaching expertise are fully understood by all staff and implemented consistently.

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 outstanding 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in June 2017.

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	136882
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10290585
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,008
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	263
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jane Gotschel
CEO of the trust	Alex Lofthouse
Headteacher	Jill Sweeney
Website	www.astonmanor.bham.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school uses four registered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- About a third of students in the sixth form are part of the sports academy. This means that they receive training in football or basketball alongside their courses.

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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator. They also spoke with staff about their experience of the school.
- The chair and vice-chair of the trust and two further trustees met with the lead inspector remotely. The lead inspector also met in person with the CEO.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils at social times and with groups of pupils more formally.
- 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.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents. These included the minutes of trustee meetings and information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum, self-evaluation and improvement planning.
- The inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Natasha Rancins

Ofsted Inspector

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