

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Arrow Vale High School

Matchborough Way, Redditch B98 0GF

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 October 2024

Outcome

Arrow Vale High School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The executive principal of the school is Ian Mellor and the head of school is Matthew Rash. This school is part of the Central Region Schools 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), Guy Shears, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Orla MacSherry.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils understand and share the school's aspiration to 'aim high'. The school is working to improve outcomes so that all pupils achieve these high aspirations. Pupils understand that the school treats them as the individuals they are. The school is highly inclusive, where everyone is valued. Pupils speak positively about the support they receive from staff and enjoy their learning. There is a strong culture of safeguarding and well-being across the school. Pupils are safe and say they are happy in school. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school's ethos.

There is a highly purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils focus on their learning well, work hard and want to learn. Teachers speak calmly with any pupil who loses concentration and offer support to help them regain focus. During social times, pupils mix with others in a calm and orderly manner. Pupils know who to talk to about any concerns they may have.

The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' wider development. Pupils say they really appreciate the wide range of leadership roles they have. Sixth-form students organise committees to support local and national charities. Students also lead assemblies for

younger pupils, including around online safety. Many pupils regularly attend a range of enrichment clubs across the year, including musical theatre and 'evil genius'.

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

The school has designed a highly ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and students in the sixth form. The school has set very high expectations for pupils' future academic achievements.

Remembering key knowledge is a priority in every subject. Focused leadership has brought rapid improvement in how pupils learn in many subjects. However, despite this, the high expectations have not yet led to consistently improving outcomes in all subjects by the end of key stage 4.

The school successfully identifies the key knowledge that pupils need to succeed. Teachers present new subject matter clearly to pupils. Most teachers make effective checks on what pupils know to ensure that they understand previous learning. For example, Year 11 pupils in English used their prior knowledge well to analyse characters in a new text. However, there are times when this is not the case. The checks that some teachers complete are not rigorous enough. As a result, they do not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of whether pupils have remembered what they have learned before. This means that some teachers do not consistently adapt the learning to address any wrong ideas or missing knowledge, which limits the progress pupils make.

Students in the sixth form are positive about their learning experiences and the wider opportunities the school provides. Sixth-form teachers engage students in ambitious, challenging and independent learning. This enables students to achieve very well. Many students become school ambassadors. These ambassadors support leaders in shaping the school community. For example, students support younger students in their lessons.

The school identifies pupils with SEND quickly and effectively. Most staff use precise information effectively to consider where to adapt the learning for each pupil's individual needs. Reading is a priority at this school. The school ensures that staff and pupils read widely in registration, as well as across all learning. It is developing further work around phonics to support the weakest readers. The school gives support through extra interventions where needed. These interventions are enabling the weaker readers to become more confident and fluent.

The school analyses trends in attendance effectively and provides additional support for pupils who do not attend regularly. This work is strong and has been shared across the local authority. However, the school recognises that despite this, too many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, miss too much school. This limits the progress and achievement they make.

Pupils' well-being is at the forefront of the school's curriculum, including promoting pupils' positive mental health. The personal, social, health and economic curriculum is well planned and sequenced. Pupils have a detailed understanding of fundamental British values, healthy relationships and respecting the views of others. All pupils and sixth-form

students receive unbiased information on potential next steps and high-quality careers guidance. This prepares them extremely well for the next stages of their lives. Year 10 pupils and Year 12 students complete work experience in a range of settings. They receive valuable 'real-world' learning through this opportunity.

All leaders, including those responsible for governance, know this school well. They understand how the local context has a significant impact on pupils' learning and attendance. The school reviews and develops all aspects of a pupil's education effectively. The trust supports the school very well. Trustees and governors support and hold staff to account for the decisions taken. The school has implemented a well-thought-out professional development programme, which staff appreciate. Staff appreciate the efforts the school makes to consider their workload and involve them in policy changes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, some teachers do not use assessments well enough to check what pupils know and remember over time. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge are not identified and addressed consistently. The school should ensure that all teachers use assessments consistently and adapt their teaching to ensure that any gaps in learning are closed so that pupils are well prepared for their next stage.
- Some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, miss too much school. This affects their learning and achievement. The school should further build on its current effective work with parents and external agencies to ensure that the barriers that stop pupils attending school are removed.

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 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 December 2018.

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	138505
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10343978
Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	866
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	156
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Orla MacSherry
CEO of the trust	Guy Shears
Headteacher	Ian Mellor (Executive Principal) Matthew Rash (Head of School)
Website	www.arrowvaleacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 December 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The head of school joined in September 2022.
- The school uses three registered and seven unregistered alternative provisions for 13 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

- 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 held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, looked at samples of pupils' work and talked with some pupils about their learning.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum and improvement planning. They also checked the school's website.
- 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 observed informal times of the day as part of their evaluation of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors held meetings with the vice-chair of trustees, as the delegated person, and the CEO; the chair and vice-chair of the local governing board; the executive headteacher, the head of school and other school leaders, teachers and pupils. The inspectors also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather information about school life.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text comments. The inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Stuart Clarkson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Richard Gill

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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