

Inspection of a good school: Alvaston Junior Academy

Elvaston Lane, Alvaston, Derby, Derbyshire DE24 0PU

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 January 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending school and spending time with their friends. Most pupils are polite and kind to each other. Pupils and staff appreciate the new behaviour system that is in place. They say that the school is now a happier place. Pupils enjoy receiving 'carrots' when they follow the school rules. They do not worry about bullying. They say that they would confidently share any concerns that they have with staff. Pupils say that they feel safe.

Leaders want the best for pupils. Plans to improve the curriculum are at an early stage. In some subjects, leaders have not identified the key knowledge and skills that should be taught and when. Leaders know that there is more to do to make sure that pupils learn as well as they could.

Some pupils take advantage of wider opportunities beyond the classroom. They take part in various activities connected to achieving 'The Harmony Pledge'. Pupils enjoy opportunities to perform in assemblies and enjoy trips, including a visit to the Shakespeare Festival. Year 4 pupils learn how to play the flute.

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

There have been many recent changes at the school. A new leadership team has been in place since January 2023. Pupils, staff and many parents agree that the changes have made a positive difference to the school.

Leaders are working closely with The Harmony Trust to improve the school's curriculum. In some subjects, they have set out what pupils should know by the end of each unit or year. However, in some other subjects, they have not identified precisely what pupils need to know and in what order. The sequence of learning is not clear in all subjects. As a

result, teachers are unable to ensure that pupils build on their prior knowledge when they are learning new things.

Pupils are keen to discuss their learning. They can recall many facts that they have learned. In history, pupils named King Henry VIII's wives and where The Mary Rose sank. However, pupils' knowledge is less secure in other aspects of the history curriculum.

Leaders have made sure that phonics is taught in school. However, pupils who struggle to read are not supported well enough to quickly catch up with their peers. Not all staff have received phonics training. There is not a consistent approach to teaching the sounds that letters make. Misconceptions are not always addressed. Sometimes, the adults reinforce them. Pupils say that they enjoy reading and being read to. They read high-quality books which are well matched to their ability.

Leaders have made it a priority to improve the support that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive. They know these pupils well. They have developed new individual plans which target each pupil's needs. However, these plans are very new and have not had time to become fully embedded into the classrooms. As a result, teachers do not always adapt the curriculum well enough to help pupils with SEND to overcome the difficulties that they have. Some pupils struggle to learn what they could.

Most pupils are polite, friendly and well mannered. They understand and appreciate the new behaviour system in school. Pupils usually follow the rules in the classroom and around the school, including during social times. Sometimes, just a gentle reminder is needed. Pupils learn how to control their emotions.

Pupils have opportunities to develop both within and beyond the taught curriculum. Leaders plan trips and experiences that enrich pupils' lives. Pupils enjoy a range of after-school clubs, such as archery, 'Rock Steady' and drama. Year 4 pupils have the opportunity to learn to play the flute. Pupils' learning of fundamental British values is woven through the curriculum.

Most parents are happy with the education their children receive at Alvaston Junior. Many appreciate the recent changes that been put in place. However, some feel that communication between home and school could improve. Some parents feel they know who to go to if they are worried about anything. Others do not feel that their children with SEND get the help that they need.

Staff feel supported and valued by the leadership team. They say that they enjoy the teamwork ethos at the school. They feel that they are well cared for by each other and by leaders. Staff appreciate leaders' efforts to manage and reduce their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and most parents agree. Leaders ensure that all adults who work at school are eligible to do so. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe.

They say they can trust the adults in school to help them if they are worried or have a concern. Staff follow clear systems to report a concern about a pupil. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils and families get the support they need.

Sometimes, when derogatory language is used, pupils do not receive the support they should in order to help them to understand why this is wrong.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum plans for some subjects in the wider curriculum do not support teachers to build pupils' knowledge sequentially. Learning is not ordered in enough detail to ensure that pupils learn the crucial content in a logical way. Leaders need to ensure that the content of all subject plans is carefully sequenced, with end points clearly identified, so that pupils will know and remember more over time.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff have received effective training to enable them to understand and deliver the phonics scheme consistently well. This means that some pupils are not making the progress they could in reading. Leaders should ensure that all staff are supported to deliver the school's phonics programme consistently well.
- Most parents appreciate the work the school does to support their children in school. However, communication with parents has not always been as successful as it could be. Parents do not always receive important messages and information that they need about their children. Leaders should ensure that systems of communication are strengthened in school so that all parents are well informed.
- Sometimes incidents involving the use of derogatory language are not dealt with as well as they could be. Pupils do not always understand why this is not appropriate. Senior leaders, and trustees responsible for safeguarding, must ensure that all staff deal with such incidents well.
- Pupils with SEND are not consistently provided with all the support they need in all lessons. While the new leadership team has significantly improved the planned support for pupils in the classroom, this has not had time to have the desired impact. As a result, pupils with SEND do not always learn as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that their plans are developed and communicated effectively to all staff, to ensure that every identified pupil with SEND gets the help that they need.

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 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 predecessor school, Alvaston Junior School, be good in March 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' 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	145759
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10254871
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	335
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anne Weinstock
Principal	Andrew Dunn
Website	www.alvaston.theharmonytrust.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Alvaston Junior Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2018. When its predecessor school, Alvaston Junior School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- A new leadership team, including an acting principal and inclusion leader, has been in place since January 2023.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the acting principal and other leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer, the director of education and three other members of the trust.
- The lead inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, she met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum,

visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.

- The lead inspector spoke with parents. Account was taken of the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. She also spoke with groups of pupils and staff.
- The lead inspector met with leaders to discuss safeguarding. She met with staff to discuss their understanding of the safeguarding risks and reviewed the school's procedures to keep pupils safe. Inspectors considered documentation relating to safeguarding, the school's single central register and the system for undertaking checks on new staff.

Inspection team

Heidi Malliff, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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