

Alderbrook Leading Edge School and Arts College

Blossomfield Road, Solihull, B91 1SN

Inspection dates

22–23 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well. They make good progress in almost all subjects, including English. They achieve especially well in mathematics.
- Teaching is typically good, and some is outstanding, and that is why students make good progress in their lessons.
- The school uses data on students' progress well in order to make sure that all students and particular groups of students are not falling behind. They step in quickly to support students to catch up where necessary.
- The school gives good support to disabled students and those with special educational needs. They make good progress as a result.
- Students' behaviour is good. They are keen to learn and want to do well.
- Students say that there is little bullying and they feel safe at school.
- Attendance is above the national average.
- School leaders and governors know the school well and have planned well so that teaching and student's achievement continue to improve. Governors support the school well. They challenge school leaders to make the school even better.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers do not mark books regularly enough and students do not always know what they have to do to improve their work.
- Students make slower progress in those lessons where teachers do not capture their interest and attention.
- School leaders and managers are not monitoring the work of teachers often enough or in enough detail.
- More-able students do not do well enough in some subjects, particularly religious education and sociology.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 52 lessons, of which 22 were jointly observed with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They also observed tutor times, an assembly and break and lunch times.
- Meetings were held with students, school leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors checked books and looked at a range of documentation, including the school’s self-evaluation, school improvement plans, information about students’ progress, the school’s records of lesson observations and records related to teachers’ overall performance. They also looked at documents related to safeguarding and behaviour.
- Parents’ views were taken into account through the 200 responses to Parent View.
- Inspectors considered 92 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Denise Newsome, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Martin Spoor	Additional Inspector
Beverley Mabey	Additional Inspector
Huw Bishop	Additional Inspector
Roisin Chambers	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The school converted to academy status on 1 August 2011. When its predecessor school, Alderbrook Leading Edge School and Arts College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for specific students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for students with special educational needs. This caters for up to 40 students with speech language and communication needs and moderate learning difficulties.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A very small number of students are educated at an alternative off site provision, The Triple Crown Centre.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The acting headteacher was appointed in January 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that more teaching is consistently good and outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the quality of marking and feedback given to students is of a consistently high standard across the school so that all students are clear about how to improve their work
 - ensuring that the ways that most teachers keep students interested in lessons are shared with other teachers
 - challenging students of all abilities to achieve at the highest levels possible, especially the more-able students.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by carrying out more regular and thorough checks on teachers' work inside the classroom and on their marking and assessment of students' work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students start at the school with skills in English and mathematics which are above the national average. By the end of year 11, the proportion of students achieving at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C is well above the national average. This represents good progress.
- Achievement in English and mathematics is good because the proportion of students making and exceeding expected progress is higher than that seen nationally. This is because teaching is mainly good in both subjects and because students are set challenging targets and expected to make better than expected progress. The school also provides extra support for students who need to improve their progress in these subjects. Progress is particularly good in mathematics. The extra support in mathematics is wide ranging and has been effective in raising attainment.
- The school tracks students' progress very thoroughly using a range of useful data. This means that staff are clear about when any student or particular group of students is falling behind in their progress. Teachers run after-school revision lessons to ensure that they can catch up.
- Students gain GCSE results that are above national averages across a wide range of subjects. Attainment is good. Some subjects do not have enough top grade passes and more-able students do not do well enough in religious education and sociology, in particular.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those who are part of the specially resourced provision, make the same good progress as other students. This is because of the good support that they receive from specialist staff. They take a full and active part in lessons alongside their peers.
- The school's data shows that students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are also achieving well in English and mathematics. Each year group is doing better than the previous year group at the same point in time. This means that the recent improvements that have been made in GCSE results are expected to continue.
- The pupil premium funding is spent on extra support in a range of subjects, especially in English and mathematics. As a result, the attainment gap for students eligible for the pupil premium and other students is narrowing and they now achieve better than this group nationally in both English and mathematics. They are, on average, one GCSE grade behind their peers in English and two thirds of a grade behind in mathematics.
- Year 7 catch-up premium is being used effectively to buy in external support to accelerate the progress of those students in English and mathematics who join the school with below-average skills in literacy and numeracy. This support includes a summer school. Students have made improvements in their achievement in both these subjects as a result.
- Students read a range of literature. They read often and enjoy reading. Students with low attainment in reading make good gains in their literacy skills as a result of targeted literacy support.
- A very small number of students study off site at The Triple Crown Centre, where they get very specialist support with their learning. These students are making reasonable progress in their learning.

- Although the school has, in the past, entered students early for GCSE mathematics and students have achieved good results, the school is not currently entering students early for exams.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in most subjects, including English and mathematics, is usually good and sometimes outstanding. This is because teachers maintain students' interest in the lesson and encourage them to think for themselves. For example, in a Year 8 Spanish lesson, students were asked to create ingredients for a 'cake' using parts of sentences. They were challenged to put some 'icing on the cake' by thinking of what they could add to make their sentences more complicated.
- Teachers know their students well and very quickly pick up whether or not they have understood their learning. They are skilled at re-shaping the lesson in order to address any misconceptions and consolidate learning so that students make good progress. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson on expanding and simplifying brackets, the first part of the lesson went on for longer than intended because the teacher was aware that some students had not remembered their prior learning well enough to tackle challenging tasks. She reviewed the learning again, asked more-able students to help others and only moved on when she had checked that all students were ready.
- Teachers make good use of opportunities to improve students' literacy skills through well-structured extended writing tasks. Work in books shows that students' writing improves over time.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, and when they are excited and passionate about their subject, students are keen and enthusiastic learners, eager to do well. Students do not show the same keenness to learn when they have to complete lots of worksheets and listen to the teacher talking for much of the lesson.
- Students work very well together when they are given opportunities to work in groups. For example, in a Year 8 dance lesson, small groups of students worked exceptionally well together to produce a piece of choreography to represent key events of the 1960s. They showed good imagination and made outstanding progress because of the clear guidance from the teacher, who pushed them to get a lot done in the lesson.
- In lessons where teachers have planned well to make sure that each student can make good progress, students want to do the best they possibly can. They almost always choose to do an extra 'challenging' task where one is set. In some lessons, the extra challenges are not provided and this holds students back, especially the more-able students.
- The support of other adults in the classroom is mostly effective, especially for those students in the specially resourced provision. This support is crucial to ensuring that disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Where supporting students more generally in class, other adults do not always focus that support on helping students know and understand more of the lesson.
- There is some good marking and assessments of students' work done by teachers. It is regular, thorough and gives students very clear guidance on what to do to improve their work. However, this is inconsistent throughout the school. Some teachers do not mark regularly or simply mark work with ticks. Where this is the case, students do not know what they need to do to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Good relationships between staff and students and between students, have been built up over time. Students respond well to the high expectations placed on them regarding their behaviour. They are very supportive of each other and readily help each other out in lessons.
- In most lessons, behaviour is good. In some, it is outstanding. These lessons are characterised by students' readiness to learn, ability to work well in groups and attentiveness to the teacher.
- Behaviour at break and lunchtimes is good and students move around the school in an orderly manner, quickly and quietly going from lesson to lesson. They treat the school buildings with respect and there is very little litter. Students are responsible, respectful and helpful.
- Attendance is above the national average. This is because the school has tackled attendance issues with energy and enthusiasm. There is a team of staff who are actively involved in reducing absence rates.
- In a small number of lessons, where the level of challenge is not high enough, students' concentration can waver and they lose focus on the lesson. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say that they feel safe in school. The school addresses issues such as peer pressure and safety when using the internet through assemblies, tutor time and in personal studies education lessons. During the inspection, inspectors observed an assembly delivered to Year 9 students by the police on the topic of keeping safe on the internet.
- Students say that bullying is very rare in school. They know about the different types of bullying such as cyber-bullying, racism and homophobic behaviour. They say that the school takes any such incidents very seriously and they are confident that any bullying related problems will be dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The school has looked carefully at its behaviour policies to make sure that it is catering for the range of students' needs. For example, leaders have decided to deal with some health-related behavioural issues through educational programmes in school rather than through exclusions or similar sanctions.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusions was higher than the national average last year and is not declining this year. New data collection systems related to exclusion figures are now being used to analyse patterns of exclusion data more thoroughly so that alternatives to exclusion can be used more often.

The leadership and management are good

- The recently appointed acting headteacher and senior leaders know the school well. They have correctly identified the school's strengths and areas for further development. There is a strong focus on driving continual improvements in the quality of teaching. The track record of good attainment and progress, and the current achievement of students in Key Stage 3, demonstrates that the school has the capacity to improve.
- The recent changes to systems of checking students' progress are very effective. Students at risk

of falling behind in their work are identified quickly and given additional support to ensure that they succeed.

- The curriculum provides students with an appropriate range of subjects. Students can also take part in a wide range of extra activities after school and at lunchtime, as well as trips and visits. This helps them with their learning across the school and also gives students opportunities to take responsibility within the school.
- The school provides many opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly in lessons. For example, in a Year 9 drama lesson, the theme of human tragedy was explored through solo performance in a highly sensitive way to striking and very moving effect.
- The management of teachers' performance is good. Some appropriate targets are set for teachers, although some are vague and not all are linked closely enough to students' progress. Training needs are identified for staff as a result of this process.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They appreciate the care that their children receive and that the school makes sure that their children make good progress.
- Staff are fully supportive of the headteacher and her ambition for the school. They are very proud to work at the school and recognise the good work that is being done, not only in making sure that students make good progress but also in the way that students are cared for at school. One member of staff said, 'There is nowhere else I would rather be.'
- The school's safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.
- The school ensures that all students receive independent advice to help them prepare for their next steps in education, employment and training. This, combined with a broad and balanced curriculum, ensures that students are well prepared for when they leave school. The number of students who left school last year and who are not in education, employment and training is very low.
- Although there was agreement on grades for lessons that were jointly observed with senior leaders during the inspection, the school's records show the judgements made about teaching in lessons are overly generous. There are not enough other monitoring and evaluation activities, such as checking on teachers' marking that senior leaders carry out that can contribute to accurate judgements of teaching over time.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has actively recruited people from a range of backgrounds and with a range of skills and expertise. Some of these appointments are relatively new and their full impact has yet to be seen. Governors have recently taken on responsibility for specific areas of the school that they will monitor. Governors visit the school regularly and much of their work is carried out through an effective committee structure, which feeds back to the full governing body. Governors have a good knowledge of how pupil premium funding has been spent and the impact that it has made. Governors receive reports on the progress of students at each full governing body meeting. They are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors have ensured that teachers are not rewarded for poor performance.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136994
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	430003

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1281
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annette Scott
Headteacher	Tracey Lord
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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