

Aston Manor Academy

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

Inspection dates

6–7 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Pupils at this school do significantly better than other pupils nationally with similar starting points. Leaders prepare pupils exceptionally well for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- The headteacher is an inspiring leader. She has become a champion for the community. Pupils and staff hold the headteacher in high regard. The headteacher is an exceptional professional.
- The Equitas Academy Trust is an exceptionally talented team. It holds the school to account and supports the school with rigour and imagination.
- Leaders throughout the school are very skilled. Leaders understand the needs of their pupils in detail and have planned a highly effective curriculum.
- Leaders have built a track record of success since the last inspection in 2013. The school has maintained exceptionally high standards of pupils' progress every year.
- Pupils currently at the school are making outstanding progress from their different starting points.
- Most pupils at the school are supported by pupil premium funding. Leaders ensure that the funding is used to good effect. As a result, these pupils make much better progress than other pupils nationally.
- Teachers give highly effective support to pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, these pupils make very strong progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress. The special educational needs coordinator has planned a range of high-quality learning and support.
- Teachers plan learning that engages, challenges and motivates pupils of all abilities. Pupils learn skills and acquire knowledge in depth and with breadth.
- Pupils behave impeccably in lessons and throughout the school. They are polite, thoughtful and determined to do well.
- Pupils in the sixth form make rapid progress in their academic studies and on vocational courses. The leadership of the sixth form is imaginative and resourceful.
- Safeguarding is at the heart of everything the school does. Pupils do well because they are safe and well cared for in a community that celebrates diversity.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that examination results continue to rise for pupils of all abilities by improving pupils' discussion and thinking skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders have the highest expectations for pupils, the staff and themselves. Despite the fact that most pupils come from some of the most deprived backgrounds, pupils' achievement is significantly better than other pupils nationally with the same starting points.
- Leaders are ambitious for their pupils and for the wider community. The school is a beacon of excellence in the local area. Leaders prepare pupils exceptionally well for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Leaders understand the school in detail. Leaders use information about pupils' learning and progress to plan the curriculum, improve outcomes and plan for the future.
- All staff are supported by the school's performance management process. Leaders make sure that teachers are supported and challenged in a robust and sympathetic manner. As a result, the school has attracted and retained teachers and non-teachers of a very high quality. Staff are very supportive of leaders. As one member of staff said in the staff questionnaire: 'There is a good climate for collaboration and staff feel that they can rely on each other at any time. I am proud to be a member of staff at this school and feel glad to come into work each day.'
- The school has designed a professional development programme that gives training to all staff that meets their needs. The school believes that there should be a culture of consistently high standards and it achieves this through its training. The programme is sufficiently flexible so that when teachers need training specific to their professional needs, this is what they receive. All new teachers are offered a coach and a mentor in addition to their line manager. This means that staff offer their pupils a wide range of learning opportunities.
- Leaders make highly effective use of the pupil premium grant. Disadvantaged pupils make much better progress than most other pupils nationally in a wide range of subjects in key stages 3 and 4. Leaders use catch-up funding successfully. Pupils with lower levels of English and mathematics in Year 7 make rapid progress.
- The curriculum is rich and entirely suitable for the full range of pupils' abilities and aspirations. The school plans very high-quality academic and vocational curriculum routes. There is a rich extra-curricular provision with theatre, the arts and particularly sports opportunities available to pupils after school, at the weekend and in the holidays.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning is a strength of the school. Pupils learn about online personal safety, the functions of national democratic life and taking responsibility for one another. Pupil leadership is a strong feature of this school. Pupils are committed to taking care of each other and celebrating the diversity of each other's backgrounds.
- Leaders ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least as good progress as other pupils nationally. These pupils are cared for and challenged by the school with very high standards of professionalism.

- The school takes seriously its commitment to equality and diversity. The school celebrates and encourages diversity of faith, culture and point of view. Pupils from a very wide range of backgrounds flourish and are valued.
- Safeguarding is a strength of the school. The school sees safeguarding and pupil achievement as closely linked. Pupils do well in this school because they feel safe and secure.
- Leaders make sure that the school does all it can to teach pupils of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. As a result, pupils know what to do if they are worried by issues of extremism and radicalisation.

Governance of the school

- The trust board gives skilled and dedicated leadership to the school.
- The trust has constituted itself so that it is fully representative of the school's community. The trust has ensured that its members are talented and skilled in governance. The trust is stable, thoughtful and rigorous in its work.
- The trust uses performance management to ensure that all staff are well trained and held to account for pupils' progress. The trust does this in a supportive and encouraging manner. This is appreciated by staff who feel valued and challenged in equal measure.
- The trust uses the pupil premium funding and catch-up funding exceptionally well. Pupils supported by these resources make much better progress than other pupils nationally.
- The trust ensures that it puts safeguarding at the heart of its work. The trust believes that safeguarding is essential to promoting high standards of pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are very effective.
- Pupils' safety is at the heart of everything this school does. It cares for its pupils exceptionally well. Leaders keep safeguarding records meticulously. Staff recruitment is thorough and safe. Staff maintain detailed care plans so that pupils get highly effective support.
- Leaders train their staff well so that all have a secure understanding of, for example, managing children missing in education, the 'Prevent' duty, and all required statutory policies. Inspectors were shown case studies of how well pupils who are at risk of harm are supported.
- Pupils describe how they keep themselves safe online and they have a very astute awareness of cyber bullying and how to avoid and report it.
- Pupils celebrate difference and diversity of belief and culture. Pupils are vigilant against radicalisation and know well the dangers of extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The school raises achievement by promoting pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers encourage a love for learning, and there is a spirit of curiosity and enquiry in lessons. Pupils ask highly insightful questions about subject content and about how they can improve their work. Pupils know their grade targets. Pupils are eager to be successful learners and, because they are so well supported by their teachers, achieve better than other pupils nationally.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is of a very high standard. They plan learning that is challenging and engaging. Pupils feel confident with their teachers and respect them. Pupils speak highly of their teachers and value the commitment teachers make. Staff hold Saturday, half-term and after-school classes to support their pupils and these are very well attended.
- Inspectors saw many examples of pupils using teachers' feedback to improve their work. Pupils know that their questions about how to make progress will be answered clearly and helpfully. In pupils' workbooks, inspectors saw many examples of time being given for pupils to improve their work.
- The school values homework and sees it as a means for pupils to explore ideas and practise classwork to secure pupils' skills and understanding. Pupils say that they find much of their homework interesting and helpful. For example, inspectors saw examples in pupils' workbooks of extended writing being set in science, religious education (RE) and English. This helped develop pupils' skills of evaluation, comparison and explanation.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very strong. Pupils see school as a safe and secure place where their interests and ambitions will be nurtured by teachers and other staff. Pupils respond with high levels of engagement. Time is used effectively in lessons so that, for example, pupils can craft their writing, absorb ideas and reflect on new knowledge.
- Teachers encourage pupils to learn from mistakes, and they do so willingly. Workbooks show that pupils make corrections and this is a key feature of their learning. Pupils see self-improvement as an essential part of their learning. They use their workbooks as records of their learning and talk about their books proudly.
- The school promotes the skill of thinking aloud and sees it as key to the progress pupils make. Leaders say that this is an area for development for the school. Leaders want pupils' discussion skills to further improve and believe that this, along with improving thinking skills, will help even more pupils gain the highest grades at GCSE. The inspectors heard pupils in lessons correcting themselves in discussion with their teachers, and sometimes thinking aloud to develop an idea in RE, compare language effects in English or work out calculations in mathematics.
- Pupils take learning seriously and know how important it is for their future education and employment. Pupils want to get good grades because it will help them in the future, but they also want to learn because they enjoy discovering new knowledge and improving their skills. Leaders believe that progress is strong because pupils are interested in learning as well as meeting their grade targets.
- Leaders help teachers use accurate information to plan learning and review the

progress that pupils make. Plans are challenging and enable pupils of all abilities to make better progress than other pupils nationally. Teachers know their pupils well. Teachers know the histories, interests and aptitudes of their pupils and use this alongside accurate starting point information. Pupils feel that their teachers understand their needs and barriers to learning. Pupils feel challenged and say that this helps them make progress because teachers encourage and reward their effort.

- Teachers and pupils challenge stereotypes. Through their assembly, tutor, RE and arts curriculum, pupils celebrate diversity. Pupils are proud of the many cultural backgrounds from which they come. They are eager to say how each person at the school is valued and accepted for who they are and what they can bring to the school community.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are self-confident and self-aware. They speak eagerly of their ambitions for the future. Pupils say that they want to go on to, for example, sports-related apprenticeships and academic degree courses. Pupils know that there are leadership opportunities for them in the school and they relish being appointed as prefect or standing for the posts of head girl or boy. Pupils want to make a positive contribution to the life of the school and willingly take part in music- and arts-related activities.
- Pupils understand how to be successful learners. There are many pupils who have come from other schools and other countries. These newcomers speak highly of the support they have received and how glad they are to be at this school.
- The school provides a comprehensive and thorough education in physical and emotional well-being. For example, the school has employed a part-time educational psychologist who plans support for pupils in a timely manner. The school's personal, social and health education is well delivered in tutor times and through lessons across the curriculum. This means that pupils see the link between their physical and emotional well-being and their success in gaining the highest possible grades.
- Leaders help pupils know how to stay safe online. Pupils take this very seriously and talked to inspectors about how they report any evidence of online bullying.
- The school's records show that there is very little bullying in any year group. This is supported by pupils, who say bullying is very rare and if it arises it is dealt with promptly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- In all the lessons seen during the inspection, pupils' behaviour was impeccable. The school tracks any poor behaviour and responds with consistent and firm sanctions. Pupils rarely misbehave, but the school is not averse to using exclusions when this is in the interests of the safety of the whole school community. Exclusions are declining

over time.

- It is striking how many pupils are so self-disciplined. Pupils' behaviour is so good that teachers' reprimands are rare. Both teachers and pupils have the highest expectations of themselves. Pupils regard it as unfair if one of their peers misbehaves. Pupils say that it does not happen often because there is a shared understanding that good behaviour leads to good grades.
- Pupils respect the school environment. There is almost no litter. Displays are helpful to learning and promote a spirit of enquiry. In the entrance hall, there are chalkboards on the main pillars and teachers use these to remind pupils of key mathematical formulae. The school has painted Shakespeare quotes and more mathematical terms and ideas on the staircase steps. Leaders are eager to promote good behaviour by encouraging pupils to think about subject content wherever they go in their school day.
- Levels of attendance are markedly rising. Attendance is better overall than the national average for maintained schools in England. Last year, some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were persistently absent. These pupils' attendance is now significantly improved. This is because pupils have been well supported by close liaison between the school, pupils' families and local authority agencies.
- Behaviour in alternative provision is highly positive. Pupils concentrate well, engage in learning willingly and appreciate the efforts the school has put into their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Current pupils' progress from different starting points in English and mathematics is significantly better than other pupils nationally. This was also the case in 2016 and in each of the years following the last inspection in 2013. Pupils' progress has been, and remains, consistently outstanding.
- Progress from different starting points of pupils in a range of subject areas is also significantly better than for other pupils nationally. For example, in French, history and geography, pupils' progress is outstanding.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than the national average. These pupils do very well at the school and achieved well in 2016 in their GCSEs. Those pupils currently at the school are making strong progress. The support for these pupils in class and in language classes arranged by the special educational needs coordinator is expertly planned and delivered.
- Pupils currently at the school are working at the highest levels of attainment from much lower than average starting points in a range of subjects in humanities, languages and vocational subjects.
- Progress from different starting points of disadvantaged pupils is at least as good as other pupils nationally. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils' progress placed the school in the top 5% of schools nationally.
- Most of the pupils at the school are entitled to support from the pupil premium. Leaders use the funding to offer challenging teaching, well-managed resources and highly effective training. As a result, the current cohort of disadvantaged pupils make outstanding progress right across the curriculum.

- From different starting points, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress. This is because learning is very carefully planned. Teachers have the highest expectations for pupils, no matter what their learning difficulty or disability. In mathematics, for example, teachers track meticulously the skills pupils need and acquire. No pupil is allowed to fall behind and pupils feel encouraged and supported.
- The most able pupils make strong progress across all subjects. This has been the case consistently since the last inspection in 2013. Some most-able pupils achieved high numbers of A and A* grades in a wide range of subjects, including in English and mathematics, in 2016. The most able pupils make good progress, especially in French, RE, mathematics and English. This is because challenge has been managed effectively and pupils understand how to improve.
- The catch-up funding is used well to support pupils who have lower levels of attainment on entry to the school in English and mathematics. A significant majority of pupils in Year 7 supported by this grant are making at least the progress expected by leaders. In part, this is because of the excellent use of the school library to promote literacy. This library is a highly engaging resource, superbly presenting its books and encouraging pupils to read widely and for pleasure.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision make good progress. Leaders ensure that outcomes are carefully monitored in partnership with the alternative provider. Pupils follow a curriculum that prepares them well for employment and education.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for employment and education. Last year all pupils who left Year 11 went on to high-quality employment, education or training.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Leaders have very high expectations and these are well communicated to students. Students speak of the ways in which leaders motivate them to achieve. Leaders encourage students to participate in setting and reviewing targets to improve their learning.
- Achievement gaps are narrow or closing. Over time, disadvantaged students make progress equal to and often better than other students nationally. This is the case for academic and vocational courses.
- Leaders judge progress in vocational and academic subjects for current students to be much better than national averages. Inspectors observed exceptional progress in most subjects, both academic and vocational.
- In 2016, value-added outcomes improved to significantly better than national average standards in vocational subjects. In academic subjects, value-added outcomes were better than the national average for most subjects.
- Leaders use external measurements of their own assessments effectively to compare current cohort progress with national standards. This enables them to give accurate feedback to their students and hold teachers to account.
- Teachers make sure that learning and assessment are imaginative, thoroughly planned and meticulously tracked in lessons. In one lesson in AS mathematics, for example,

students had done considerable preparation for the lesson and were using this to understand how algorithms work. They could talk about this mathematical concept with some interest and discussed its wider applicability. In another lesson, in vocational sport, students talked with pride about how they took part in sport outside school. Students could discuss ball velocity and trajectory, and link this to their work in physics. Students spoke of how graph skills helped them plot optimum throwing technique.

- Students are interested in learning. They focus quickly in lessons, applying a wide range of thinking skills that the school values. They place a high value on evaluation, comparison and analysis skills, because the school believes these are key to high-quality learning and securing high grades.
- Students in the sixth form see themselves as ambassadors for the rest of the school and in the wider community. They say they have a responsibility to promote high-quality learning throughout the school.
- Safety is of paramount importance to students and teachers. Students understand how to keep themselves safe on the internet. They understand what to do should they encounter radicalisation and extremism.
- 16 to 19 study programmes are well planned and delivered by the school. Work experience and work-related learning is of high quality and students value it, seeing it as an essential part of their learning. This helps students in the next stage of the learning journey and almost all students go on to education, employment or training at the end of their time in Year 13. The school also retains a significant majority of its students who started in Year 12. Numbers in the sixth form are rising dramatically.
- Careers learning is delivered well. The school uses an independent agency to assist with this. Students take careers learning very seriously and use it to help motivate them and make clear what grades they need and to make appropriate subject choices.
- Students who retake their GCSEs in the sixth form do very well. In November 2016, 60% of students who sat the GCSE in English gained the grade C or higher that they had not achieved in June. Standards achieved by these students were very much higher than the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	136882
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10032774

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	921
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	167
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Alex Lofthouse
Headteacher	Heather Roberts
Telephone number	01213 598 108
Website	www.astonmanor.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@astonmanor.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is part of a multi-academy trust called the Equitas Academy Trust. There is one other school in the trust and this is the local primary school, Chillwell Park Academy.

- The school is approximately average in size compared with other schools nationally.
- The very great majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, the largest of which are Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African ethnicity. The school has a lower than national average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school has a higher than national average proportion of pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding.
- The proportion of pupils at the school whose first language is not or is not believed to be English is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who come from deprived socio-economic backgrounds is much higher than the national average.
- The school uses an alternative provider called St George's Academy, which was graded good for overall effectiveness at its most recent inspection in 2013.
- Pupils' ability on entry to the school is significantly lower than national averages.
- The school meets the current government floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 37 lessons through key stages 3, 4 and 5. An inspector conducted a visit to one of the school's alternative providers, St George's Academy.
- Inspectors conducted a joint work scrutiny with members of the middle leadership and senior leaders.
- Inspectors held a range of meetings with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team and middle leadership staff.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors met with pupils and discussed with them their learning and workbooks.
- Inspectors scrutinised the single central record, met with the designated safeguarding lead and scrutinised a range of records of recruitment, welfare plans and actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- Meetings were held with middle leaders and their senior line managers.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation that the school produces as part of its self-evaluation and development planning, and policies and documents published on the website and made available during the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at 69 responses from the staff questionnaire. There were very few responses to Parent View and 42 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Graham Tyrer, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Eddie Wilkes	Ofsted Inspector
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David Buckle	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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