

# Aylestone School

Broadlands House, Broadlands Lane, Hereford, Herefordshire HR1 1HY

## Inspection dates

23–24 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Wide-ranging changes made by new leaders came too late to ensure good outcomes in GCSE examinations in 2017.
- The most able pupils did not achieve high enough grades in GCSE examinations in 2017. There is still insufficient challenge for the most able pupils currently in school.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities did not make good enough progress in 2017. Some disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4 are still not making good enough progress.
- Middle leadership is not yet consistently strong. Some leaders' expectations have not been high enough in the past.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including the quality of teachers' planning and questioning.
- Attendance rates for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are too low.

### The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of how to make the necessary improvements to pupils' progress. They are beginning to improve teaching.
- The governing body is more alert to its responsibilities and increasingly effective.
- Pupils' behaviour is polite and courteous in lessons and around the school at lunch and breaktimes.
- Pupils are proud of their school and their workbooks.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are well trained and records are clear and secure.
- Leaders have planned effective social, moral, spiritual and cultural learning. Pupils celebrate a wide range of cultural traditions. Many pupils take part in the school's extra-curricular opportunities.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all pupils, and particularly disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make at least good progress, by:
  - making sure planning and teaching are securely based on pupils' starting points and learning needs
  - ensuring that teachers provide work that is relevant, engaging and interesting
  - ensuring that pupils are clear about how to improve their work and learning
  - further improving the quality and use of homework.
- Improve the progress of the most able pupils, particularly in key stage 4, by:
  - providing work that is appropriately challenging
  - asking questions that make pupils think hard and lead to more active participation and engagement in their learning
  - providing pupils with opportunities to deepen their knowledge and apply their skills across a range of subjects.
- Improve leadership and management, by:
  - making sure all middle leaders have consistently high expectations of pupils
  - ensuring that middle leadership makes a stronger contribution to sustainable school improvement.
- Make sure disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities attend school more regularly, by:
  - working with the parents of pupils who miss too much school
  - continuing to improve careers information and guidance so that pupils understand the importance of regular attendance at school.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management can be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Following the last inspection, leaders were too slow to make changes and bring about improvements. Year 11 pupils in 2017 and 2016 did not get good enough grades in their GCSE examinations.
- The quality of middle leadership is improving but is still not strong. Some middle leaders do not have consistently high expectations of pupils. Senior leaders are working with middle leaders to ensure that improvement plans for subjects are clearly linked to impact. Middle leaders now have a better idea of the progress pupils are capable of making, although there is more to do to raise expectations higher.
- Leaders and governors have made improvements in the use of the pupil premium grant and funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Targeted pupils are benefiting from improved revision materials, more-careful planning and additional lessons provided both in the school day and afterwards. However, the impact on examination results remains to be seen. Leaders know that further improvements are required as progress is still not good.
- More recently, the headteacher, governors and the local authority have worked together to make improvements to teaching, learning, assessment and leadership. As a result, pupils' progress overall is improving across both key stages and across most subjects.
- Leaders have now embedded changes that had begun in 2016 and which were recognised by the 2016 Ofsted monitoring inspection. The school's information about current pupils and the work inspectors saw in lessons and workbooks suggest that improvements in progress are picking up pace.
- Leaders now track pupils' progress more effectively. Leaders have a better idea of pupils' capabilities and set targets for them that are realistic and demanding. Teachers use these targets to plan their lessons and discuss with pupils how to improve their work. As a result, progress is improving. Nevertheless, there is still much to do here. Work provided for higher-ability pupils, for example, is sometimes less challenging than it should be.
- Leaders have changed the curriculum and consider more carefully the GCSE subjects that pupils study. In addition, more time has been allocated to the teaching of English and mathematics in Years 10 and 11. The headteacher has ensured that key stage 4 tutor groups are led by English and mathematics specialists. This means that once a week Year 10 and 11 pupils have an early morning session on English and mathematics skills. In these sessions, and in pupils' books, inspectors saw improvements in pupils' basic skills of spelling, punctuation and arithmetic. However, currently, these sessions do not sufficiently challenge the most able pupils.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching and learning more frequently than they used to so teachers feel supported and challenged. Where teaching is weaker, leaders work alongside their colleagues to make improvements.
- The school works effectively with its federation partners. For example, leaders at Aylestone have planned work together with their primary partners in order to refine

provision in Years 7 and 8.

- The headteacher works regularly with the local authority and two national leaders in education. He asks for challenge from these partners and has used their feedback to evaluate the changes he is making. He is not over-reliant on this help but knows that it is important for support to continue if the current pace of change is to be sustained.
- Leaders are improving careers education, information and guidance. Each pupil has a personal interview with an independent guidance provider and a follow-up interview with school leaders. Pupils say they feel well supported by leaders and motivated to put effort into their work.
- Leaders now have a training programme for teachers and teaching assistants that focuses more on what will make an immediate difference to pupils' work. They have worked with other local schools to check the accuracy of their assessments and make sure teachers are trained how to teach the new GCSE requirements.
- Leaders have worked to improve pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. They have designed a curriculum that enables pupils to learn about democratic responsibility. They also learn about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism and the importance of responsible behaviour. Pupils say that they enjoy taking up school council roles, prefect and other leadership jobs in school. Pupils were given the responsibility of deciding with leaders on the new school uniform. They chose a formal style of uniform which, they say, has helped them to take a more business-like approach to their studies.
- Pupils enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities. During this inspection, they gave positive feedback about, for example, the chess club, after-school drama sessions, scrabble club, a range of sports, and trips to the Houses of Parliament.

## **Governance of the school**

- Since the last inspection a new chair of the governing body has been appointed. Most of the present governing body are also new since the last inspection. Given that there were so many new governors, the governing body initiated a review of governance in April 2017, which proved beneficial.
- Governors have overseen key changes to the school's leadership and middle management. They have set about securing changes in performance management, school self-evaluation and development planning. There are signs that these changes are driving improvements.
- Governors undertake regular monitoring visits to the school. They ask leaders for appropriate information about pupils' progress and ensure there is swift follow-up where progress is too slow. As a result, pupils in key stages 3 and 4 are making better progress. Governors are aware that progress is still not good enough, especially for some disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils.
- The governing body is also responsible for the two primary schools in the federation. Governors have worked to improve the reputation of Aylestone School with their partner schools. They have explained to their partners how teaching is improving and how it is matched more closely to the abilities and interests of pupils. Governors have made it easier for pupils to get to the school from the outlying villages by paying, on

occasion, for school transport. They have introduced a new school uniform.

- As a result of the positive work of leaders and governors, there has been an increase in the number of families making Aylestone School their first preference choice for next September.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors have overseen leaders' work to develop the safeguarding culture of the school. They check the school's safeguarding arrangements regularly. Governors receive frequent training and they make sure that new governors are given induction training to promote the school's safeguarding culture.
- There are strong systems in place for record-keeping, training and recruitment. This means that pupils are kept safe. Regular staff training means that staff can take appropriate action when necessary. Leaders and staff work closely with the local authority to support any families that need additional support.
- Parents believe that their children are safe at the school. Pupils say they feel safe. They know to whom they can turn if they have concerns about themselves or others.
- The school's curriculum helps pupils learn about keeping safe. They are taught, for example, how to stay safe online and how to avoid the dangers of radicalisation. Pupils learn effectively how to respect one another and promote a culture of anti-bullying.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, teaching, learning and assessment have not been good enough. This has led to underachievement, for example for those pupils taking their GCSEs in 2017.
- Leaders have made sure that teachers' planning has improved. Leaders know that there is more to do to make sure teaching is based securely on pupils' starting points. There are still too many occasions when teaching does not take sufficient account of pupils' current levels of knowledge and understanding. For instance, teachers' use of questioning to check on pupils' understanding is inconsistent. At times, progress is not good enough because questioning and subsequent activities are not demanding enough. This means some pupils, and particularly the most able, mark time.
- Higher-ability disadvantaged pupils are still not being given work that allows them to make good enough progress. Leaders and teachers are addressing this urgently with weekly training sessions. Teachers work together to share and develop effective lesson plans. Teachers challenge each other when learning is not rapid enough.
- Teachers are still not setting helpful homework for pupils. In numerous instances, pupils' tasks are not clearly linked to the assessments and tests they will take. In order to improve the situation, teachers set aside time after school to focus on this and have begun to communicate regularly with home.
- Teachers now carefully plan learning for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, the progress being made by these pupils is improving. There is still work to be

done here, especially for the most able pupils with additional needs who are not sufficiently challenged by their work.

- Over the last year, teachers have worked more closely together to plan their approach to the new GCSE syllabuses using advice from other schools. They have checked the quality of their assessments with leaders, with one another and with colleagues in local schools. This has resulted in greater teacher confidence in the classroom.
- Pupils, too, feel more confident about the teaching they receive. They readily make improvements as a result of the guidance teachers give them. Inspectors saw in English books and assessment folders, geography, history, mathematics and science workbooks pupils putting effort into making improvements to their work. They are clearly proud of their work and want to succeed.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' books show they are proud of what they do. Most books are neat and well ordered. Pupils make improvements in their work, adding further detail to essays, for example, or repeating tests and assessments.
- Pupils are confident and polite in lessons and around the school. They open doors for visitors and wear their new school uniform with pride.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online and in the wider community. They learn about the importance of looking after one another and taking responsibility for their actions.
- School records show that the incidence of bullying is low. Pupils say that it hardly ever occurs and, if it does, teachers deal with it quickly.
- Pupils respect their teachers. Classrooms are well ordered and pupils can get on with their learning without distraction.
- Leaders have introduced an 'exam results day' and a second 'mock exam week'. Pupils say that this helped them focus on improving their grades.
- Pupils are punctual to lessons and bring the right equipment. They settle quickly to their work and do not usually need many reminders from teachers to settle and pay attention.
- Leaders have introduced an Aylestone outstanding achievement award. Pupils say this has had an immediate impact on their motivation. They say it helps them work harder and focus on achievement.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- While attendance is rising for pupils overall, it is still too low for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Pupils whose attendance is low are being supported by the school. Leaders have given

additional time and resources to staff who help families. As a result, there have been recent improvements in attendance. Leaders are aware that there is still more they could do to support parents whose children miss too much school.

- There is an orderly environment around the school. Pupils behave well in most lessons. In some lessons, higher-ability pupils do not take an active part because work is insufficiently challenging.
- Leaders have increased the effectiveness of behaviour management strategies. Staff are using rewards more consistently. They help pupils at risk of poor behaviour before problems arise, rather than afterwards. As a result, the rate of exclusions has fallen since 2016. Many more 'achievement points' are being awarded by teachers because pupils value their education and are putting more effort into their work.
- The majority of responses to Parent View are positive about behaviour at the school.
- Pupils know that stereotyping and using derogatory language are unacceptable. Pupils learn about the traditions of different faiths and they value cultural diversity.
- The small number of pupils who attend the alternative provision are punctual, attend regularly and have positive attitudes to their learning.
- At break and lunchtimes pupils respond well to their teachers and do what they are told. They stay safe around the school site.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- In 2017 and 2016, pupils in Year 11 achieved less well overall in their GCSE examinations than would be expected of pupils with similar starting points nationally.
- In 2017, higher-ability pupils, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities did not get good enough grades in a range of subjects such as English and the subjects of the English Baccalaureate.
- Progress of pupils currently at the school is improving in key stages 3 and 4 and across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Inspectors saw evidence in lessons and books where pupils had made clear progress in line with their starting points. Nevertheless, there is more to do to ensure that the most able pupils do as well as they should at GCSE level.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is better this year than in previous years. Teachers have worked to improve these pupils' confidence and make their lessons more challenging. However, there are still some disadvantaged pupils who do not make good enough progress, given their starting points.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making improved progress in key stages 3 and 4. This is because work is better planned and teachers work more closely with leaders and teaching assistants.
- In science, achievement has been historically low. Progress is now much better for pupils currently at the school. This is because there is better preparation for assessments this year. Pupils take regular tests of core content and use the results to make improvements in their skills and knowledge.
- In the English Baccalaureate achievement is improving in key stage 4. Pupils regularly

write at length, giving reasons, supporting with evidence and comparing historical influences and geographical features. Higher-ability pupils, however, are still not achieving as well as they should.

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. Inspectors scrutinised their records and talked with pupils and teachers and found that these pupils are doing well. Their achievement across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, is an improvement on recent years because they are being challenged more successfully.
- Pupils read widely and with better fluency than in the past. Pupils read for pleasure in their own time and learn how to make more use of the school's library.



## School details

Unique reference number	116936
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	10042857

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	384
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Rice
Headteacher	Simon Robertson
Telephone number	01432 357371
Website	<a href="http://www.aylestone.hereford.sch.uk">www.aylestone.hereford.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:srobertson@aylestone.hereford.sch.uk">srobertson@aylestone.hereford.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	12–13 January 2016

## Information about this school

- The new headteacher was appointed in September 2017. New members of the leadership team also took up their posts at the same time.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the composition of the governing body, including the appointment of a new chair of the governing body. The school formally changed its name to Aylestone School in September 2017.
- The school is part of a federation of schools. The other two schools are: Broadlands Primary School and Withington Primary School.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are believed to speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Hereford and Ludlow College.
- In 2017, the school met the government's floor standards for the minimum expectations for achievement at GCSEs.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 35 lessons through key stages 3 and 4.
- Inspectors conducted 14 joint work scrutinies in lessons with the headteacher and members of the middle and senior leadership teams.
- Inspectors held a range of meetings with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also had discussions with middle leaders.
- Representatives of the governing body met with inspectors.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning and work.
- The single central record of checks on staff was scrutinised by inspectors. They also met with the designated safeguarding lead and scrutinised a range of records relating to recruitment, welfare plans and actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation which the school produces as part of its self-evaluation and development planning.
- Inspectors looked at 31 responses from Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 37 free-text responses to Parent View.

## Inspection team

Graham Tyrer, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Caroline Hoddinott	Ofsted Inspector
Tracey Lord	Ofsted Inspector

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