

Inspection of Aston Fields Middle School

Drummond Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 2ET

Inspection dates:	12 and 13 November 2024
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since June 2014. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

An overwhelming sense of community and mutual respect greets you as you arrive at this school. Relationships between pupils and staff are exceptionally supportive and focused on pupils achieving their potential. Pupils appreciate their teachers and know that they want them to be successful in their learning. As a result, they achieve well. Pupils understand and follow the school's mission of 'striving for excellence, learning for life'. They are safe and know who to talk to about any concerns they have.

There is a purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils can focus on their learning. On the very rare occasions when there is low-level disruption, teachers act quickly and efficiently to address it. During social times, pupils move around and mix in a calm and orderly manner. This is evident in pupils' exemplary behaviour, pride in their appearance, and how they speak to visitors and staff.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development exceptionally well. Pupils receive an extensive range of careers, cultural and leadership experiences. This includes Year 8 pupils supporting younger pupils as well-being mentors. In addition, many pupils regularly take part in a range of clubs, such as cardio-drumming and forensic science. These opportunities enhance their wider experiences effectively.

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 those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils demonstrate significant achievement in their learning and are well prepared for their next stage.

The school has precisely identified the important things that pupils need to know to succeed. Teachers use activities at the start of lessons to help pupils recall and build on their learning. Pupils welcome this and say it helps them to remember the most important information. For example, Year 6 pupils explain clearly their understanding of pentatonic scale from Year 5 music and how this now helps to develop their skills on the keyboard. Teachers effectively check pupils' understanding and whether pupils remember what they have learned before. Teachers then make effective adaptations to ensure each pupil achieves their potential.

The school supports pupils with SEND effectively. It ensures that they access the same ambitious curriculum. The school quickly identifies pupils who are not confident readers. Staff support them to address weaknesses in phonics, grammar and comprehension. The school supports pupils' wider reading in all year groups exceptionally well. It provides an effective and extensive range of activities in and outside school. This helps to deepen pupils' understanding of vocabulary across a broad range of texts.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They show high levels of focus and engagement in their learning and respect for each other during breaktime and lunchtime. They welcome the positive rewards, such as 'golden tickets' linked to reading and house points, which motivate them to set a positive example in lessons and around school. Overall, school

attendance is exceptionally high. The school takes decisive action to support the small number of pupils who need to catch up on their work quickly when they return.

Personal development is a strength of this school. All pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life beyond school. They receive appropriate, comprehensive and timely advice about the next stages of their education and career opportunities. Pupils from Years 5 onwards have opportunities including visits to local universities for Year 8. The extensive personal, social, health and economic education programme allows pupils to learn about personal safety, healthy relationships and independence. Many external speakers talk about local and national concerns, which can affect the pupils in school.

All leaders, including those responsible for governance, understand deeply how the school's local context impacts on pupils' learning and attendance. The governing body holds the school to account well for all aspects of provision, including exceptional safeguarding and the quality of personal development. The school has implemented a comprehensive and well-thought-out professional development programme for staff, which staff welcome. Recent changes to school policies and expectations have supported the commitment to staff workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	116957
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10343836
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	597
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jean Richardson
Headteacher	Andrea Hales
Website	www.astonfields.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 June 2014 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has undergone significant changes since the last inspection. This includes the appointment of the current headteacher, who took post in February 2023, and changes to staff in senior, subject and pastoral leadership roles.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, French, history, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at the curriculum, lessons and pupils' work in other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum and improvement planning. The school's website was also checked.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day as part of their evaluation of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. Additionally, inspectors spoke to pupils to discuss their views about school life.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing body, the vice-chair of the governing body and another governor.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and also spoke with a school advisor for The Spire CofE Learning Trust.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the free-text responses. They also took into consideration the online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Stuart Clarkson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Stewart Tait

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