

Inspection of a good school: Altwood C of E Secondary School

Altwood Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 4PU

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 September 2023

Outcome

Altwood C of E Secondary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Neil Dimpleby. This school is part of The Altwood Church of England Trust. The school is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jan McLucas.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school takes pride in quickly identifying what all pupils need to succeed. The systems in place ensure pupils feel welcomed and supported. This has been particularly important as the number of pupils on roll has continued to increase.

The school has high expectations of all pupils. In response, pupils are considerate, polite and courteous. In class, and around the school, pupils work diligently and behave well. They know that teachers want the very best for them. This helps pupils to achieve well, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Students in the sixth form feel particularly well supported. They willingly share their ambitious future plans. Students value the dedication of their teachers, including the tailored teaching provided. Sixth-form students are very proud of their position of responsibility in the school and the impact they have. They remember how they felt as new pupils and want to carry on this tradition of support.

Pupils value having friends across the school community and in different year groups. Younger pupils appreciate the mentoring guidance provided as well as the time they spend with sixth-formers, who run some of the school's varied extra-curricular activities.

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

The school is determined to provide an education that helps pupils to be confident, engaged and happy learners. Focusing on these areas has led to a distinct culture throughout the school. Pupils' excellent behaviour in lessons enables teachers to provide specific support when needed. Around the school, pupils are calm. They enjoy socialising in 'The Hub' canteen area where year groups mix at breaktime and lunchtime. Pupils recognise and value the supportive relationships that exist throughout the school

community. This is further supported by valuable teaching about the importance of respect and healthy relationships.

Pastoral support is provided daily by knowledgeable and experienced staff. Pupils have confidence that they will receive any help they need if they have any concerns. Staff expertly use carefully considered strategies to support pupils who need more help to manage their behaviour. These help to ensure these pupils can continue to learn effectively along with their peers.

During lessons, questioning and discussions are frequent. Pupils listen politely and enjoy debating topics, even when they disagree with their classmates. Teachers' deep subject knowledge has supported the development of the schools' thought-provoking curriculums. Pupils build their knowledge and understanding through well-ordered topics. Teachers use their professional development time to share their ideas about the important themes they teach. However, in some subjects, the precise identification of the knowledge pupils need within topics is less clear. This makes it harder for teachers to identify any specific gaps pupils may have and where specific opportunities are needed to revisit previous learning.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects in all key stages, including the sixth form. While the school is ambitious for pupils to achieve highly, the number of pupils choosing to study modern foreign languages at GCSE is much lower than other subjects. The school understands the urgency in addressing this so that more pupils study the full set of English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects. Recently, the school has also adapted the sixth-form subject offer. New A-level and vocational qualifications reflect the different interests and needs of the growing number of students who attend.

The school has a busy enrichment programme, which develops pupils' cultural capital. A wide range of clubs are run by staff and sixth-form students. These include the popular 'Uno Club' and the unique 'Cheese Club'. The community atmosphere across the school is strengthened through Friday's house competitions, such as the light-hearted whole-school quiz. The annual careers day encourages all pupils to explore a wide range of employment sectors. Targeted careers activities and additional guidance help pupils to be ambitious for their futures. One sixth-form student described the school's career education as 'enlightening'. While many pupils benefit from the extra-curricular offer, leaders want to do even more to ensure the most disadvantaged pupils get the most out of these valuable opportunities.

Staff are proud to work at the school and are supportive of each other. They are committed to the school's vision in helping all pupils to succeed. New staff and early career teachers are quickly inducted to ensure they are able to contribute straight away. Governors also provide appropriate challenge and support to help the school continue to grow and improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some of the precise knowledge is not yet as carefully sequenced in some subjects as it is in others. This means that teachers do not always quickly identify and fill any gaps pupils have in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders should ensure that all subject curriculums identify the knowledge that pupils need at each stage and that teachers carefully check what pupils know and remember.
- The proportion of key stage 4 pupils who are entered for EBacc subjects has been lower than the national average over time. Too few pupils study a modern foreign language at GCSE. Leaders need to increase the number of pupils who study a modern foreign language at GCSE to make sure the EBacc is at the heart of the curriculum.

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 school to be good in October 2017.

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	138342
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10241928
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	749
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	90
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jan McLucas
Headteacher	Neil Dimpleby
Website	www.altwoodschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 October 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a standalone academy.
- The school currently uses five registered alternative providers.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Oxford. The last Section 48 inspection took place in May 2019.
- 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders and other staff.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also met with a representative from the diocese.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys as well as speaking to staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sam Robinson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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