

# Inspection of a good school: Alt Academy

Alt Lane, Oldham, Lancashire OL8 2EL

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Inspection dates:

2 and 3 November 2022

## Outcome

Alt Academy continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to Alt Academy. They know that staff expect them to work hard and conduct themselves sensibly. Pupils rise to these high expectations. They are keen to learn because teachers make learning engaging and interesting. Pupils learn well in most subjects.

Pupils feel safe, and are safe, in school. They know that staff care about them. They know who to go to if they have any worries. Leaders and staff make pupils' well-being their top priority. For example, on the rare occasions when bullying occurs, leaders deal with it effectively.

Behaviour is positive throughout the school. From the start of the early years, children learn clear routines. They understand how they are expected to behave. In all years, pupils follow their teachers' instructions with a minimum of fuss. The school is calm throughout the day.

Pupils appreciate the large number of activities and opportunities that the school provides as part of 'The Harmony Pledge'. Sport and music are popular. Pupils visit museums and take part in plays. Older pupils take on leadership responsibilities. One pupil told the inspector, 'There is a job for all. Everyone is included.' Leaders carefully plan these experiences so that no one misses out.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. Pupils study an appropriate range of subjects. Teachers are clear about what pupils should know and remember. Pupils' learning mostly builds well from the early years through to Year 6.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) study the same curriculum as their peers. Leaders identify pupils' needs accurately and in a timely manner, often soon after they join the school. They provide high-quality support that ensures that pupils with SEND learn effectively in all years.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They explain new concepts well and they check that pupils understand new content. Usually, the work that teachers set helps pupils to understand and learn important knowledge. For example, in mathematics, teachers carefully select problems that help to build pupils' basic skills and develop their ability to explain their thinking.

In some subjects, however, this is not consistently the case. At times, the tasks do not help pupils learn what teachers want them to learn. Occasionally, the teachers' desire to make tasks engaging distracts pupils from a focus on key subject knowledge.

Leaders have recently revised how teachers assess pupils' learning. Although it is early days, it is already proving effective. Teachers' checks on what pupils have learned enable them to target extra help to where it is needed.

Ensuring that all pupils become fluent readers is one of the school's top priorities. This begins in the Nursery class where children listen to stories and sing nursery rhymes. Phonics teaching begins in the Nursery Year and continues through Reception and key stage 1, and beyond for some pupils. Phonics is taught well. Most pupils quickly learn letters and the sounds they make. Staff provide extra help for pupils who find learning to read more difficult. This helps them catch up and become confident readers. Most pupils enjoy reading.

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning throughout the school. In lessons, they are attentive and keen to contribute to discussions or to read aloud. Disruption to learning is rare. There are respectful relationships throughout the school.

Leaders prioritise pupils' wider development. They provide a carefully planned programme of activities and experiences for pupils in all years. For example, all pupils in key stage 2 learn to play a musical instrument. Pupils take on positions of responsibility that help to develop their character and self-confidence. Some pupils are part of the children's leadership team. Others are friendship monitors or mental health ambassadors. Young interpreters encourage children in the Reception Year to read.

The school is well led. The trust provides strong support and challenge to leaders. Staff have great confidence in the school's leaders. Leaders ensure that staff's workload is manageable. They are mindful of the well-being of all who work in the school. Staff feel that they belong to a team, with their leaders.

Relationships between the school and parents are strong. Leaders are committed to supporting pupils and their families. The school's staff are equally committed. Parents appreciate the school's support and are full of praise for its work in this respect. For example, in partnership with a local supermarket, staff operate a foodbank that parents use each day. The school's breakfast club is open, free of charge, to pupils and parents each morning.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of keeping pupils safe. They have trained staff thoroughly. Staff know that keeping pupils safe is their top priority. They pass on to leaders any concerns that they have. Leaders deal with these concerns appropriately. They make every effort to get pupils and families the support that they need. Leaders are tenacious in challenging agencies when they believe that pupils are not getting the right help.

The curriculum helps pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. For example, pupils learn about online safety, healthy relationships and how to look after their own mental health.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some subjects, the tasks given to pupils do not consistently contribute to their learning of the subject as well as it should. This means that pupils do not learn or remember important knowledge as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that the work given to pupils consistently helps pupils to learn and remember important curriculum content.

## **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 September 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](#)' 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.

## School details

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 141333   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Oldham   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10241853   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Academy sponsor-led  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3 to 11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 334  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Anne Weinstock   |
| <b>Principal</b>                           | Katie Jordon   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.alt.theharmonytrust.org">www.alt.theharmonytrust.org</a> |
| <b>Dates of previous inspection</b>        | 12 and 13 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005          |

## Information about this school

- The principal took up her post in October 2021.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the principal and other senior leaders. He held discussions with two trustees, including the chair of the trust board, the chief executive officer and the director of education of the trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, he discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also discussed the curriculum in other subjects with leaders. He considered the school's work to support pupils with SEND.

- Safeguarding was considered by meeting with the principal, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, and other members of the safeguarding team. The inspector scrutinised policies and records relating to child protection and examined the safeguarding checks made on staff before they join the school.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and talked to them about their reading.
- The inspector spoke with several members of staff, including those who have recently joined the teaching profession. There were no responses to the staff or pupil surveys.
- The inspector spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. He observed the school at these times.
- The inspector spoke with parents at the start of the day and considered the responses, including written responses, to Ofsted Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

Alun Williams, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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