

Inspection of St Alban's Church of England Primary Academy

St. Albans Close, Ashmore Park, Wolverhampton WV11 2PF

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders' vision for pupils to be enthusiastic, independent and inquisitive explorers who fulfil their potential is vibrant, alive and visible across the school. Whether talking to leaders, staff or pupils, the same strong sense of working 'as one' shines through. Many parents and carers agree.

Pupils speak with pride and knowledge about their learning. The same is true of the many and varied jobs they do to help everyone be safe and work and play well together. They are right to be proud. Pupils are happy and safe. They behave well. Leaders deal well with bullying if it should happen.

Younger pupils achieve exceptionally well. Moving up through the school, leaders have put actions in place to ensure that older pupils achieve equally well. These actions are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

Pupils' maturity, politeness and knowledge are evident during conversations. The youngest pupils chat away about their learning. Their excitement and enthusiasm are infectious. Older pupils sensitively discuss discrimination, equality, career choices and their aspirations for secondary school and beyond. They are well equipped to face the modern world they are growing up in.

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

Trustees have truly fulfilled their mission in providing unswerving commitment to the school community. Trustees and school leaders have successfully worked with determination and dedication to improve this school. Staff morale is high. Staff feel valued. They say, 'we are one team, one voice.' They are right.

Staff know each individual pupil well. They are quick to note any additional needs as they appear. Leaders' attention to detail and deep and continual questioning ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), get the right help at the right time. As a result, all pupils, including those with SEND, are supported to be successful learners. The 'reset areas' in classrooms help pupils to regulate their behaviour, so learning is not disrupted.

Pupils enjoy their learning. Their behaviour ensures they get the most from their lessons. Most come to school regularly and on time. Leaders keep a very close eye on who is and who is not in school. They swiftly follow up any absence. Their wraparound view of attendance considers the child and their family. They start the process of developing good habits for attendance from the early years. This process is steadily improving attendance. Leaders provide targeted help to the many pupils who join the school at different times throughout the year. This helps them to settle quickly and well to the school routines and their learning.

Leaders have a distinctive and united ability to step back and ask, 'What is right for our pupils?' Once this is answered, they create bespoke education and care that fit together seamlessly. The curriculum is centred around the child and the community. However, they never take their eye off the bigger picture: to ensure that pupils are equipped with all they need for their next steps in school and life. It is through their exceptional 'personal life skills' curriculum that they sow the seeds of creating a zest for learning, a knowledge of safety, and being a respectful citizen.

Leaders build upon the 'personal life skills' curriculum with a carefully crafted subject curriculum, which sets out, step by step, from the early years upwards, what pupils will experience, learn and remember. All pupils, including those with SEND, benefit from very knowledgeable staff, who use the structure provided and high-quality resources to good effect. For example, in art, pupils talk about the purpose of grades of pencils and when and why they would use them. In history, pupils use what they know about trade to make links between different periods of time. Occasionally, teachers do not use information from their checks on learning to give pupils enough opportunities to apply what they know. This hinders the depth of knowledge that some pupils gain.

Leaders prioritise reading. Younger pupils are taught phonics well. They become increasingly fluent in reading words, phrases, sentences and then books. For those who struggle, targeted help makes sure they catch up. Older pupils read a range of texts, but not all pupils use the best strategy to read an unknown word.

Pupils in the early years use what they learn in books as a springboard to leap high in their learning. They develop an increasingly sophisticated ability to act out, talk and write about stories. Everywhere you turn, the attention to detail is evident. Skilled staff, a beautifully thought-out environment, plus a carefully constructed curriculum and deliberately designed activities combine to provide powerful learning experiences. Children make the most of this offer. You cannot walk through the rooms without children stopping you to talk, as they rightly have much to share. These youngest children embody leaders' vision and truly are fulfilling their potential.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, staff, pupils and parents work in partnership to keep pupils safe. From making the correct checks as staff start at the school, to providing targeted and timely training, safeguarding is central to school life. Leaders and staff know what to do, when and why. And they do it. Leaders are not afraid to challenge if the right help is not forthcoming.

Right from the start of Nursery, pupils learn about safe and unsafe contact. Their learning about safety builds up, layer by layer. It extends over time to cover sensitive and important issues of healthy friendships and puberty.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, teachers do not use assessment well enough to move pupils' learning on. This means that some pupils have limited chances to apply what they know in different contexts. Leaders need to ensure that teachers use assessment information well to design learning experiences that enable pupils to apply what they know.
- Some older pupils have limited strategies to read unknown words. This impacts on their fluency in reading. Teachers should ensure that older pupils have a greater range of strategies to use when coming across an unknown word.

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

Unique reference number	145747
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10256808
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Coles
Headteacher	Matthew Wynne (Associate Headteacher)
Website	www.stalbansceacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Manor Multi Academy Trust. The school joined the multi-academy trust in September 2018.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There have been recent leadership changes during the autumn term of 2022. The associate headteacher was appointed in September 2022. The previous headteacher retired in December 2022. A new head of school took up their post at the start of January 2022.
- The school is part of the Church of England Diocese of Lichfield. The school's section 48 inspection was carried out in March 2016. The next inspection is due within eight years of their previous inspection.
- The number of pupils leaving or starting at other than normal points of transfer is equivalent to about a quarter of its current roll.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school and senior leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to other subject leaders and looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects, including science, geography and English.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chair of trustees. They met with the chief executive officer and deputy chief executive officer.
- Inspectors listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- The lead inspector reviewed responses to Ofsted's online parent, pupil and staff surveys.
- Inspectors met with leaders about the school's safeguarding procedures. Inspectors reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors spoke to pupils and staff about pupils' safety.
- The lead inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's evaluation and improvement plans, the scheme of delegation and information on the school's website.

Inspection team

Kirsty Foulkes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Khalid Din

Ofsted Inspector

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