

Inspection of Aylesbury Grammar School

Walton Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP21 7RP

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Aylesbury Grammar School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Aylesbury Grammar School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish in this exceptional school. They are proud to attend, and demonstrate strong levels of commitment to their education. Leaders eloquently articulate the purpose and values of the school. They have high expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils share these high aspirations and are eager to do their best, so they work hard and achieve consistently highly in all subjects.

The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. They show high levels of respect for each other, staff and visitors. Bullying is not tolerated. On the rare occasion it does happen, pupils have confidence in how staff act swiftly to address any concerns or unkind behaviour. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Leaders have developed a broad and ambitious curriculum that extends far beyond the academic. The personal development of pupils is a towering strength of the school. There is an abundance of opportunities designed to develop and nurture pupils' character and talents. Pupils relish the opportunity to make positive contributions to the school and local community. The 'student committee for change' is highly regarded. As part of this, pupils make a significant contribution to school development priorities, such as promoting equality and diversity.

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

Leaders have designed a demanding curriculum. They have diligently planned and sequenced the precise content that pupils need to know and remember in all subjects. This helps pupils to gradually build knowledge over time. Consequently, pupils make strong connections with what they have learned before. For example, in English, pupils develop language techniques important for characterisation in Year 7. In Year 8 they learn about Elizabethan texts and sonnets and in Year 9 they study tragedy. This carefully structured curriculum thinking provides pupils with a deep understanding of language which prepares them effectively for key stage 4 and beyond.

Leaders place high importance on reading. They have ensured pupils have access to an abundant collection of books in the school library. The librarian provides a wide range of activities to promote reading. This encourages pupils to read widely and often. Effective support helps those very few pupils who need it to become fluent and confident readers.

Staff are highly skilled in the subjects that they teach. Their subject knowledge is strong. This enables teachers to explain complex concepts to pupils. Assessment helps teachers understand what pupils know and remember. Staff provide regular and purposeful feedback. Pupils take responsibility for remedying their own gaps in their learning. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND access the same ambitious curriculum as all other pupils. Leaders expertly identify pupils' additional needs. All staff effectively use the support plans provided to inspire pupils with SEND to

achieve their best possible outcomes. As a result, all pupils achieve extremely well across all subjects.

Sixth-form students achieve exceptionally high standards. They study a broad range of academic and vocational subjects. Students have high aspirations. They realise these, with many successfully gaining places at their desired universities. Sixth-form students also play a crucial part in the running of the school as prefects and senior students. There is an extensive volunteering programme. Students mentor younger pupils and help at local schools.

Leaders provide a vast range of opportunities for pupils to develop their character. Through this, pupils learn courage, resilience, ownership, innovation and motivation. Younger pupils respect older students in positions of leadership and eagerly aspire to take on these responsibilities themselves. The house system promotes a strong sense of belonging. The personal, social and health education curriculum is exemplary. Pupils learn about issues that are critical to their personal development. For example, they learn how to develop respect for themselves and others. Pupils tackle current issues such as toxic masculinity head on. Pupils take part in an abundance of clubs and societies designed to develop talent and enable them to contribute to society in a positive way. They benefit from many opportunities to be responsible, respectful and active citizens.

Leaders and staff work diligently to prepare pupils for the next steps in their education. All pupils receive high-quality careers advice and information. Sixth-form students receive excellent support and guidance to help them with university applications.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Leadership throughout the school focuses on excellence. Inspirational staff development enables staff to engage in research and development in their own subject. They share leaders' and governors' passion to further develop the school. Governance is a strength of the school. Governors and trustees are knowledgeable and passionate. They offer appropriate challenge to leaders and are generous in their support of the school as well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training. They receive regular updates about the local issues that may affect pupils. Staff are aware of how to report concerns if they arise. Leaders monitor individual safeguarding cases diligently. They take timely and effective action when necessary.

Pupils know that staff care about them. They trust staff to respond appropriately if they raise concerns or ask for help. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They learn how to look after their own physical and mental health.

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	136884
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10242428
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,333
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	403
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Richard Williams
Headteacher	Mark Sturgeon
Website	www.ags.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Aylesbury Grammar School converted to become an academy school in February 2012. When its predecessor school, with the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
- The school is part of a single academy trust, with the same name as the school.
- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information 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.

- 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 senior leaders of the school, members of staff, and pupils. The lead inspector also met with governors and a representative of the members of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science (physics), history, physical education and modern foreign languages. 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 reviewed curriculum thinking, work and lessons in art, geography and drama.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with staff, pupils and parents to gather their views. They considered 346 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 224 free-text comments. Inspectors also took account of 106 responses to the staff survey. Inspectors spoke to a number of pupils while on inspection and took account of 418 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Laurie Anderson	His Majesty's Inspector
Marian Feeley	His Majesty's Inspector
Neil Strowger	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Cartwright	Ofsted Inspector

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