

# Inspection of Aspire AP School 2

70 Raglan Road, Smethwick B66 3ND

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Inspection dates: 3 to 5 December 2024

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Parents and carers say this school changes the lives of their children. And they are right. Almost all pupils join the school after having previously been out of education for a long time. After some time at the school, pupils do well. They value staff's hard work and attend more regularly.

This school is ambitious and aspirational for its pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Adults are committed to helping pupils overcome their barriers to learning and succeed. The meaningful relationships successfully make these aims a reality. As a result, pupils re-engage in their education and learn to learn again.

Care, nurture and a sense of belonging permeate every aspect of the school. There is a strong focus on pupils' mental well-being after previous negative school experiences. Daily breakfast and lunches that all eat together help pupils gain a sense of belonging and feel part of the school community. Pupils say staff understand them and care about them.

Pupils learn to behave well. Staff deal with any incidents of poor behaviour very effectively. All members of the school can explain their role in making Aspire AP School 2 a happy school.

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

The school knows that many pupils join this school after time out of education and with many gaps in their learning, especially in literacy and mathematics. It has created a curriculum that focuses on addressing these gaps first. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' thinking skills. This helps pupils to experience success effectively and motivates them to try hard and not give up even when the work is hard.

In most subjects, what pupils should learn and in what order is clear. However, this is not consistent across the curriculum. This means that in a few subjects, the precise knowledge and skills pupils should know and by when is not always clear to staff. When this happens, pupils cover many new concepts over a short period of time without deepening their learning in those subjects.

The school regularly finds out what pupils have learned. Checks in lessons are ongoing, and staff generally spot anyone who needs help. They address gaps in pupils' knowledge and any misconceptions. However, at times, pupils who are ready to learn new content are not routinely supported to do so. Consequently, those pupils do not reach their potential.

Staff work well to identify and support anyone who needs additional help. Leaders get to know pupils very quickly and share information with staff on how best to support pupils with SEND, including in lessons. For example, lessons have frequent

rest breaks so pupils can succeed throughout the day. This is effective, and pupils do well.

Reading is important to all. Pupils have daily reading sessions and read widely across the curriculum. They read aloud after a short time because they have gained the confidence needed to do so. The English curriculum clearly supports this work by focusing on the foundational knowledge pupils need. Despite this, currently, there is no systematic approach in place to support pupils at the early stages of learning to read. This means that for the very few pupils who need specific support, this is not routinely provided.

Pupils' behaviour is supported by strong relationships. Staff skilfully utilise these to help those pupils with their conduct. Routinely, staff intervene before any issues arise. After a short time at the school, pupils modify and improve their behaviour. Consequently, the school is calm and orderly.

The school works hard to secure strong attendance. All understand the barriers many pupils have to attending frequently. Leaders work exceptionally well with parents to ensure these barriers are overcome. As a result, the attendance of pupils improves significantly.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is strong. This work includes a plethora of outdoor activities in which pupils keenly take part. Pupils receive effective bespoke careers advice and guidance. Pupils are taught about fundamental British values and healthy relationships in an age-appropriate way. The school has ensured that the statutory guidance on relationships and sex education and health education is met.

School leaders and the proprietor set a clear strategy, hold themselves and staff to account and meet their statutory obligations. They accurately identify the school's strengths and what needs to improve. They have ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards in a systematic and consistent way. The school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. All staff speak highly of the support they receive, including for their well-being and workload. They are proud to work at this school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The curriculum in some subjects does not clearly identify the precise knowledge and skills pupils should learn over time. This means that staff are not always clear on what to teach and when. The school should ensure that the curriculum in all

subjects enables staff to teach the knowledge and skills pupils need to be successful.

- Occasionally, staff do not spot when pupils are ready to learn new content. As a result, some pupils are asked to do the same things and do not reach their potential. The school should ensure that staff have the required expertise to support all pupils' learning effectively.
- There is no systematic phonics approach in place to support pupils who are at the very early stages of learning to read. Consequently, these few pupils are not always as well supported as they could to learn to read. The school should ensure that there is a systematic approach in place to support pupils' reading.

### **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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135608
<b>DfE registration number</b>	333/6129
<b>Local authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	10342065
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent day school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	7
<b>Proprietor</b>	Aspire AP Education CIC
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Royal
<b>Headteacher</b>	James Lawlor
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£19,344 to £39,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	07943 183021
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.aspireapschool.org/school-two">www.aspireapschool.org/school-two</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@aspireapschool.bham.sch.uk">info@aspireapschool.bham.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23 to 25 November 2021

## Information about this school

- Aspire AP School 2 is an independent day school registered for up to 15 pupils. The school is located in Smethwick in a church building.
- The school offers places to pupils who are at risk of or have experienced permanent exclusion and/or have social, emotional and mental health issues.
- Pupils join the school at various times throughout a school year for different lengths of time. Most pupils have been out of education for prolonged periods of time before joining this school.
- Pupils are referred to the school by local authorities, mainstream schools and other external agencies.
- The school was last inspected in November 2021, when it was judged to be good.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has a Christian ethos.

## Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher and other staff. The inspector held a meeting with the proprietor who is also the chair of the governing body. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders and other staff.
- The inspector met with the company's leaders for curriculum and pastoral support.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, reading, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Other subjects were also considered during the inspection.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour and interactions during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes and spoke to pupils during the inspection.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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 inspector took account of the parents' free-text comments and the responses on Ofsted Parent View survey and spoke to parents on the phone. The inspector also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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