

Portslade Aldridge Community Academy

Address: Chalky Road, Portslade, Brighton, East Sussex, BN41 2WS

Unique reference number (URN): 137063

Inspection report: 20 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	●
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Inclusion is central to the school's work, underpinning leaders' actions in fundamental ways. Systems and processes are highly effective. Pupils' specific needs are identified very accurately, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others with barriers to their learning. Leaders set high expectations for pupils. Provision is designed expertly to meet these needs precisely and to support pupils' learning. Skilful teachers ensure that specialist provision is effective. Leaders use alternative provision carefully and very well to support pupils' academic progress and personal development .

Leaders provide a wide range of appropriate training to ensure that staff have the right expertise and information to support pupils very well. There is a well-founded pride here in how well the school knows pupils and tracks their progress, both in terms of their wellbeing and their learning. Leaders check that pupils are achieving really well, making judicious revisions and changes to provision when necessary.

Leaders have a very good understanding of the support that disadvantaged pupils require. They use this to ensure their actions have a positive impact on these pupils' achievement and to make sure that disadvantaged pupils make a full contribution to school life.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils' results in examinations at the end of key stage 4 are broadly average over time. While there is some variability in outcomes between subjects, there are some real strengths, for example in science, mathematics and modern foreign languages. In subjects where pupils' attainment has been lower in the past, leaders have made well-judged and swift improvements. Overall, therefore, pupils currently at the school achieve well across the curriculum in both key stage 3 and 4. They are well prepared for their onward destinations when they leave school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make suitable progress from their starting points. Disadvantaged pupils and other pupils with barriers to their learning are also progressing well through the curriculum overall. Any gaps between their achievement and that of other pupils are closing steadily. Pupils whose knowledge and skills in writing or reading have been lower in the past are catching up with other pupils.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is ambitious and very well designed to ensure that pupils gain the right knowledge, skills and understanding that they need for future success. Leaders have an accurate and insightful view of the quality of curriculum and teaching. They work together to

rightly share best practice across the school. Leaders identify any areas to improve and take effective action to address them, providing teachers with effective support.

The school's approach to teaching aims to enrich and extend pupils' learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure, and they receive effective training and other support to develop this further. Teachers generally use questioning well to deepen pupils' understanding. Any adaptations for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils are appropriate. In more effective practice, teachers' explanations and subsequent structuring of pupils' learning are particularly effective. Teachers provide support for pupils' reading and writing if they need it. They also develop pupils' vocabulary well.

Although teachers' checks on pupils' learning are typically effective, at times, teachers move on before pupils have secured their understanding of important knowledge and concepts fully. Sometimes teachers are not fully aware of pupils' starting points or gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that pupils' progress through the curriculum is not as secure as it could be.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders set an ambitious vision for the school. They lead by example, setting the standard for staff in terms of professionalism. They have improved key aspects of the school since the last inspection, resulting in a very positive culture at the school that helps pupils to flourish. This is characterised by leaders' high expectations for pupils and the way in which leaders work to realise these in practice. Leaders rightly put pupils at the centre of all of their decisions, particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and others with barriers to their learning. Leaders monitor and review the school's provision with insight and accuracy, taking the right action to make improvements.

Trustees and local governors are knowledgeable and understand the school's strengths and priorities. They rightly see that attendance is a central key to further improving the school, including pupils' achievement. Their oversight of safeguarding and all aspects of the school is tight. Local governors and trustees know the school very well and challenge leaders effectively, ensuring that levels of accountability are high. They fulfil all the requirements of their roles effectively.

The training that staff receive is effective over time and targeted to address key areas for improvement. Teachers who are new to the profession are supported very well to make a successful start to their careers. Most staff feel that leaders consider their workload carefully and take meaningful action to reduce it where possible. Staff feel proud to work at the school and that leaders really invest in them.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is wide ranging and fulfils the necessary requirements, including in terms of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). Pupils learn about equalities and what this means for them and for society. PSHE is typically well taught. Pupils' gain appropriate knowledge across the PSHE curriculum

including around health, financial management and online safety. Pupils develop secure understanding of the values necessary for making a positive contribution to society and for life in modern Britain, for example the importance of democracy and the rule of law. Their knowledge in some areas is particularly deep, for example in RSHE. Pupils enjoy PSHE lessons and like exploring different issues and aspects that are relevant to their lives, either now or in the future. They learn about how to look after their own wellbeing and that of others.

Pupils reflect regularly on different cultures and the importance of respecting people from a range of backgrounds. They explore contrasting beliefs that people have. The school's highly effective ethos is founded on pupils' understanding of the importance of positive social relationships. Pupils have a strong understanding of what is right and wrong. They largely have high levels of respect for each other. Pupils with any barriers to their learning participate fully in the life of the school because of the effective provision that the school makes.

Pupils value the school's careers programme very much. They get the right help and support so that the vast majority go on to positive education or training courses when they leave school. Staff take particular care to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils benefit from this fully. However, pupils' engagement with employers and their experience of the world of work is an area that leaders are rightly taking action to strengthen further.

Needs attention ●

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention ●

Pupils' rates of attendance overall have been relatively low in recent years. This includes, importantly, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Although there has not been enough of a rising trend in pupils' attendance over time, leaders' actions have led to modest positive improvements more recently. Leaders are using a wide range of approaches, including identifying the issues for particular pupils and providing individualised support. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has improved steadily but remains above average. When pupils attend school regularly, they generally achieve well. Leaders and those responsible for governance are rightly fully focused on increasing the pace of improvement in pupils' attendance.

Leaders have worked intensively on improving pupils' behaviour since the last inspection, and it shows. Pupils engage very well in lessons, listening, concentrating and responding effectively. Low-level disruption is very rare. There is a highly positive environment and atmosphere around the school. Suspensions have fallen dramatically as a result. Pupils value how they are rewarded for good behaviour. The school's work to support pupils with specific behavioural needs is particularly effective. Pupils, parents and staff agree that behaviour is a strength of the school. Staff get great support from leaders with managing behaviour and put the school's policy into practice consistently well.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils develop a very strong sense of pride and belonging because of the highly positive ethos of the school. Pupils behave really well, and relationships throughout the school are warm, trusting and open. Pupils make a central contribution to developing and deepening the school's culture of respect and ambition. They experience a very well-designed curriculum that is delivered effectively by knowledgeable teachers. The school provides well for pupils who have specific needs or barriers to their learning. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully involved in school life. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps when they leave school.

Pupils work and socialise very well together and have positive attitudes to school. This serves them well for life beyond school, and they develop the right values to make positive contributions to society. Although most pupils enjoy school, too many do not attend regularly enough, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. This means that they are not benefiting enough from the effective provision that the school makes.

Pastoral support is a strength. Staff care for pupils and give them the support that they need when they need it. Staff know pupils well, and pupils feel safe. Pupils value greatly the support and care that they receive. Most feel that bullying is rare but dealt with well. Pupils are confident to raise any worries that they have with staff, who then act on these swiftly and appropriately.

There is a full and wide-ranging extra-curricular programme that enables pupils who participate in these activities to explore new interests and develop their existing skills and talents. These include a wide range of sporting and artistic pursuits. Pupils take on particular roles that develop their leadership experience, such as being prefects or members of the school council.

Next steps

- Pupils' rates of attendance need to improve further and rapidly so that pupils are benefiting fully from the school's effective provision and achieving more. This is particularly the case for pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders should build on the early positive indicators of improvement to ensure that there is a securely rising trend in pupils' attendance levels over a sustained period of time.
 - The school should continue its work to improve the consistency of teaching further so that it is, overall, highly effective. In particular, leaders should ensure that teachers check the security of pupils' knowledge routinely before moving on to new content and understand fully pupils' different starting points so that subsequent learning can be adapted accordingly.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of Aldridge Education multi-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jane Fletcher, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Rupert Nichols.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the principal, vice-principal, representatives of trustees, including the chair, and with a number of members of the local governors, including the chair of the local governing committee. Inspectors spoke with a wide range of staff and pupils.

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.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of 9 alternative provisions, including 6 that are unregistered.

Principal: Mark Poston

Lead inspector:

Matthew Haynes, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Scott Norman, Ofsted Inspector

Andy Rees, Ofsted Inspector

Caroline Lowing, Ofsted Inspector

Peter Fry, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 20 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

928

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,075

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

32.11%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

4.53%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

18.43%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	41.7%	45.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45.5%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	42.9%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	42.5	45.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	46.6	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	44.8	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.01	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.10	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	19.3%	25.6%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	26.4%	25.8%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	16.3%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	31.0	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	37.5	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	30.1	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.36	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.87	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	19.3%	52.8%	-33.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	26.4%	53.1%	-26.7 pp
2022/23 (final)	16.3%	52.4%	-36.2 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	31.0	50.3	-19.3
2023/24 (final)	37.5	50.0	-12.5
2022/23 (final)	30.1	50.3	-20.2

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.36	0.16	-0.52
2022/23 (final)	-0.87	0.17	-1.03

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	88%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	95%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	90%	94%	Average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	11.3%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	11.8%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	11.9%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	26.1%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	35.0%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	33.8%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright