



Vauxhall Astra 2.0DTi



What's different?

A 100bhp version of Vauxhall's Di diesel engine now fitted to upper-trim Astra.

WE WERE NONE TOO IMPRESSED WITH the level of noise, vibration and harshness that came with our previous 82bhp diesel Astra estate car. We were particularly interested, therefore, to discover how this higher-powered version (with additional intercooler and higher boost pressure for the turbocharger) fared in this respect.

Available at present only in the upper trim CD and CDX derivatives, this diesel car doesn't come cheap, so good mechanical refinement should be an important consideration.

Sadly, the hatchback's lower-speed and secondary-road progress still left us dissatisfied. There's a conflict of interest in that this sort of engine produces energetic pulling power from around 1700rpm, so it's nice to be able to use long-legged gearing to capitalise on this and enjoy the higher-speed effortless progress and fuel economy that such high gearing affords. However, such a strategy means that you're doing 45mph in fourth or 55 in top before 2000rpm is exceeded on the tachometer.

The Astra continues to suffer from an unpleasant engine-induced vibrancy and a general feeling of

harshness all the way to 2000rpm – especially when pulling hard. The result is that you spend longer in the lower gears or drive faster to enjoy the more-than-acceptable smoothness that switches in thereafter.

We also continue to feel that the ride (particularly on our CD's 60-Series, lower-profile tyres) isn't as compliant on the diesel as it is on the 1.6 petrol version.

It all adds up to paying more and getting less smoothness and refinement, in the pursuit of the extremely lively performance with excellent mpg figures of which this car is capable.

We like the full inventory of equipment offered on the CD version, nevertheless. The interior takes on a quality look and feel, with sensible reach-and-rake adjustment of the leather-clad wheel, a fine, easy-to-fathom radio-cassette and even bottle/can holders on all four doors. The painted bumper shields ought to have plastic caps, to avoid paint-scuffing, however, and although the plastic door sill protection is commendable, it does nothing to protect your trousers from road filth.

VERDICT

Larger capacity, four-cylinder engines (diesels especially) aren't easy to smooth. However, some rivals are managing it and until Vauxhall succeeds in doing so, there's good reason for considering the impressive 1.6 petrol version instead.