

SUMMARY FROM THE HEADTEACHER

The term got off to its usual positive start.

Positive highlights include:

- (1) We welcomed 174 year 7s in September, which is 14 students over our published admission number.
- (2) Our open evening was a success. We had over 400 children attend with their respective parents, which means a footfall in excess of 1000 people. Hopefully, many of these will be converted into first choice places in March 2026. The reputation of the school is strong in the area, our standards are rising and we are the school of choice for parents and students in the local area. We will continue to build on this solid foundation.
- (3) IMet with officers from the LA place planning team on 6th November and discussions are ongoing regarding expansion of Ashton's PAN to accommodate pressure on student places in the district caused by the significant expansion of housing stock in Preston. A new 4 form entry high school is planned and is expected to open in 2030 on the Maxy Farm site, but until then, district 6 schools have been asked to expand to support the LA in fulfilling its statutory duty to provide school places for all children.
- (4) Renovation and improvement work has taken place since my last report, including the refurbishment of the music rooms in the Inspire building, the library now in room 15 and the girls and boys PE changing rooms.
- (5) We marked Remembrance Day with our now established Remembrance service, held outside, in addition to the national 2 minute silence at 11am for all indoors. This year, all year 11 students attended, plus forms and classes from other year groups, which mean that over 1/3rd of the school were outside taking part. Thank you to Mr Maddox who laid a wreath on behalf of the Governing Body. I encourage governors to attend this event next year if they are available, it really is moving and shows our school at its respectful best.
- (6) Our website is compliant with DFE expectations and continues to be updated as a platform for parental engagement.

ADMISSIONS

Total number of students currently on roll = 847

Deaf Support = 15 (20 place unit)

ASD unit = 8 (16 place unit)

Number who have joined the school – in year admissions:

Autumn term 1a 2025 = 6 (Autumn term 1a 2024 – 16)

Number who have left – in year leavers:

Autumn term 1a 2025 = 12 (Autumn term 1a 2024 = 10)

SUMMARY FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Elective home education (included in the above count of leavers)

Autumn term 1a 2025 = 5 (Autumn term 1a 2023 = 4)

The in-year leavers and elective home education figures are slightly skewed due to the following:

- One of the in-year leavers was a Y7 intake who was enrolled elsewhere
- One of the in-year leavers was a Y7 intake who did not arrive as parent elected to home educate

In line with the authority's admissions protocols, these two students were formally admitted as part of our Y7 intake but subsequently removed from roll.

ATTENDANCE

- At the end of the last academic year overall attendance was 92.3%. This placed school in the top 25% of schools nationally, in the top 10% of similar schools and is a return to pre-pandemic levels of attendance.
- Persistent Absence fell by 11% to 19.8% showing rapid improvement.

Half term 1 attendance summary

- Current attendance of 94.6% places us in the top 25% of secondary schools nationally with just 0.1% increase to take us into top 20% of secondary schools.
- Persistent absence rates continue to fall, with 18.4% of our cohort persistently absent compared to 21.3 % last year.
- There have been 6 Elective Home Education withdrawals so far in this academic year, 5 in half term 1 and 1 in half term 2.

We do need a link governor for attendance so would appreciate a volunteer. Please consider if this could be you.

SAFEGUARDING

School has a strong culture of safeguarding. All staff are confident in managing safeguarding concerns and receive weekly safeguarding briefings in addition to the annual level 1 and 2 training in September.

Claire Parkinson DSL is still absent from school through illness. Mr Clarke has stepped into the role of DSL in her absence. Fortunately we have expanded the safeguarding team in recent years to include Mrs Evans so she and Mrs Bradshaw are coping with the operational work, leaving Mr Clarke to oversee the strategic and supervision work. We are also very lucky to have recruited a colleague last year who is very experienced in safeguarding at the highest level as a result of her previous profession, and who has been invaluable as a sounding board and support for the safeguarding team. Consequently I am confident when I report to you that the culture of safeguarding is strong.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) AND CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CLA)

A review of SEND provision was commissioned in the summer term. The full report is attached as appendix 1 but below is a summary report generated using Microsoft Copilot:

This document provides a comprehensive overview of the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) provision at a school, highlighting strengths, areas for development, and key stakeholder insights.

School Data Overview

- The school has 872 students enrolled, with 11% on the SEN register at K (school action) and 5.2% at E (EHCP).
- The overall percentage of students with SEND is 16.3%, which is slightly lower than the previous year.
- SEND categories include Cognition and Learning (55%), Communication and Interaction (23%), Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) (32%), and Physical, Sensory, or Medical (29%).

Strengths in SEND Provision

- The school demonstrates strong outcomes for SEND students, with effective participation in educational and extracurricular activities.
- Parental and student feedback is actively sought and integrated into annual reviews, enhancing communication and support.
- Progress for SEND students is consistently strong across subjects, with a well-structured curriculum that supports transitions back to mainstream education.
- Reading skills are notably strong, with effective strategies in place to promote literacy.
- The school has a robust approach to preparing students for post-16 education, with strong engagement from external employers and comprehensive career guidance.
- Data systems are well established, allowing for effective monitoring of attendance, behaviour, and academic progress, ensuring no student is overlooked.
- The SEND leadership team is proactive and knowledgeable, with a clear vision for SEND provision that aligns with school-wide goals.

Areas for Development

- The SEND register could be refined to better reflect national and local data, potentially including more students.
- There is a need to enhance oracy skills among students, as they struggle to articulate and discuss their learning effectively.
- While progress is strong, there are imbalances in data outcomes due to small cohort sizes, particularly in Mathematics, which requires focused improvement plans.
- The school website could improve accessibility for parents, particularly regarding information on EAL (English as an Additional Language) support and SEND terminology.
- Opportunities for parental engagement could be expanded, particularly in online safety discussions.
- The deployment of teaching assistants needs review to ensure effective support without reliance on a "Velcro" model.
- The SENDCo's role in quality assurance of classroom practices should be

strengthened to ensure consistent application of strategies across all subjects.

Leadership and Governance

- The SENDCo is integrated into the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), ensuring SEND is a priority in school development plans.
- The SEND governor is active in holding the school accountable for SEND outcomes, attending training to enhance effectiveness.
- There is a strong culture of high aspiration for all students, with clear roles and responsibilities for SEND provision communicated to all staff.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

- Teachers are generally well-informed about student needs, with effective strategies in place for differentiation.
- The quality of teaching interventions is considered good, although there is a need for more curriculum-focused roles for the SENDCo.
- Assessment practices are robust, with formative assessments identifying gaps and informing responsive teaching.
- There is a need for improved communication of key messages regarding SEND to ensure all staff are aligned in their understanding and practices.

Working with Students and Parents/Carers

- The school actively engages parents and carers in the SEND process, with termly meetings to review progress and strategies.
- Students express pride in their school and the support they receive, indicating a positive school culture.
- There are opportunities for student leadership roles, although participation could be strengthened.
- The school provides information on local and national services, but more accessible summaries of policies would benefit parents.

Monitoring, Tracking, and Evaluation

- The school employs effective systems for monitoring SEND provision, including individual intervention records and data-driven evaluations.
- Interventions follow a clear cycle of assess, plan, do, and review, with regular adjustments based on impact assessments.
- The SEND register is accurate and regularly reviewed, although the number of students identified as needing support is lower than local and national averages.

Efficient Use of Resources

- The school has a well-structured approach to interventions, balancing class, group, and individual support effectively.
- External agencies are engaged appropriately, contributing to the holistic approach to SEND provision.
- The SEND team is well-resourced, although recruitment challenges for teaching assistants may impact the consistency of support.

Conclusion The school demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting students with

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) AND CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CLA)

SEND, with effective leadership, robust data systems, and a culture of high expectations. However, there are areas for improvement, particularly in refining the SEND register, enhancing parental engagement, and ensuring consistent application of teaching strategies across all subjects.

Overall, the report is encouraging, and we have already taken steps to action the suggested areas for improvement.

- **Number of students on the SEND register = 152 (17.9%) - 51 girls and 101 boys**
- **Number of EHCPs = 55 (6.4%) National average is 4.8%**
- **Number on SEN support = 98 (11.5%) National average is 13.6%**
- **Number of CLA: 9**

BEHAVIOURAL REPORTS – SUSPENSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

- A comprehensive summary of behaviour statistics, suspensions and exclusions was presented to the curriculum and personnel committee last half term.
- There have been 2 permanent exclusions this academic year.
- It is the right of every parent to ask for a permanent exclusion to be considered by an independent review panel (IRP) and for the first time in 20 years, we have had a parent request this. The IRP meeting is scheduled for 20th November at County Hall. I will report on the outcome of this in my Spring report.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND STANDARDS

The draft IDSR, (Inspection Data Summary Report) was released on 4th November and is attached to this report as appendix 2. A detailed analysis of this report will be shared with the curriculum committee in Spring.

The IDSR presents a detailed analysis of the school context and performance which is encouraging in many areas and confirms the priorities which school is already working on.

- Disadvantaged gaps in attainment and progress are widening, particularly in English and Maths Disadvantaged gaps in A8 and the basics English and maths at grade 4+ and grade 5+ are widening. Progress 8 overall remains close to national average
- Science, Languages, and Humanities show strong performance and positive value added
- Staffing and attendance have improved, but persistent absence and exclusions remain areas to monitor
- Post-16 destinations indicate a need to improve sustained education rates

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- We held our first fire evacuation drill early in September and I am pleased to report it was successful. The building was evacuated within 3.08 minutes and roll call was completed within 5.09 minutes.
- Issues were identified with delays in accessing the tennis courts due to bottlenecking at the court gates. The evacuation procedure has since been updated to address these concerns, and the posters in all classrooms and offices have been amended accordingly. The full evacuation was completed in 8 minutes and 19 seconds. Throughout the evacuation, student behaviour was exemplary.
- We will hold a lockdown drill before Christmas, which I will report on in the spring term.
- The Technical Fire Risk Assessment visit took place on 28/10/2025 to review the technical aspects of our fire risk assessment. Discussions between the H&S Officer and Business Manager included all the aspects covered by the fire risk assessment. During a guided tour of the building the officer explained and addressed concerns associated with fire safety matters. It was confirmed that the majority of the actions identified in the previous technical assessment conducted on 27/10/2022 have been addressed and completed and the action plan has been updated to reflect this. Outstanding actions have been highlighted in red in the report with revised timeframes for completion in the action plan. The following actions are required:
 - all actions identified in the risk assessment are considered and addressed
 - any updates or advice from other professionals are added to the action plan with the aim of closing out all actions, in particular those outstanding from the last fire risk assessment within the set timeframes.

Staffing information – starters on 1st September 2025

Name	Role in school	Additional responsibilities/notes
Jon Watterson	DT Teacher	
Clare Thompson	Teacher of the Deaf	
Stephanie Hodgkinson	DT Teacher	
Natasha Atkinson	English Teacher	
Harry Catlow	Science Teacher	
Katie Johnson	TA	
Laura Gavaghan	TA	

STAFFING INFORMATION - LEAVERS SINCE THE LAST REPORT

NAME	ROLE IN SCHOOL	REASON FOR LEAVING
Michelle Spence	TA	Personal reasons

OTHER STAFFING UPDATES

- Claire Parkinson is signed off work for health reasons. We wish her a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing her back at work when her health allows.
- Beth Smith (Girls PE) returned from maternity leave in November to full time work.
- Rob Potter (Teaching assistant) was run over crossing the road on Riversway during half term and is in a critical but stable condition. We are in contact with his mum daily and send our very best wishes his family whilst praying for Rob's recovery.

APPLICATIONS FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING

Mrs Szafranski has requested a reduction to 0.8 from 1.0, which has been agreed. Mrs Robinson has increased from 0.8 to 1.0, so there is no reduction in provision.

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS

I have received notification from the Local Authority of 2 complaints that have been made to Ofsted by parents in the last half term. In each case, the LA have been satisfied with the school's detailed response, have returned that response to Ofsted and they in turn have been satisfied that the complaint does not meet the standard for a qualifying complaint. Parents did not follow the school's complaints procedure in either case, nor was there any substance to the complaints they made; indeed, their complaint in my opinion borders on vexatious when considered in the context of the engagement that has taken place. Sadly, this seems to be a common experience for many schools.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

The RAG rated SIP for the academic year 2025/26 is attached to this report as appendix 3, with position statements included to reflect the position up to 31st October.

To remind you, the 5 priority areas are framed around 4 key themes:

Be here

Behave

Be involved

Be ambitious

They have been developed into the following improvement areas:

Mission Statement: All our students are capable of making good or outstanding progress (SPI 0.25+) and we strive together to achieve this

Priority 1 Be ambitious	Ambition – all stakeholders believe that students can succeed and achieve our mission statement
Priority 2 Be here	Attendance – Students recognise the value of high attendance and punctuality to school and lessons
Priority 3 Behave	Behaviour and attitudes – students demonstrate PROUD in their behaviour. They behave with high levels of respect, have positive attitudes to learning and are committed to their education.
Priority 4 Be engaged	Teaching and learning - All teaching is responsive and adaptive to the individual needs of students. Teachers understand what excellent teaching is because they engage with research and embrace professional development.
Priority 5 Be ambitious	Assessment and feedback – students flourish as a result of rigorous formative and summative assessment, personalised support and regular focused feedback.

FUTURE PROOFING

• School uniform

The Department for Education has proposed new guidance recommending that schools limit branded uniform items to a maximum of three, in addition to a school tie. This initiative is part of a wider effort to ensure school uniforms remain affordable and accessible for all families, helping to reduce financial pressures and promote equity.

We have always prioritised a uniform that is smart, affordable, and inclusive. Our most recent price comparison, conducted during the 2023/24 academic year, confirmed that our uniform is among the most cost-effective in the district. We are proud of this position and remain committed to ensuring that no student is disadvantaged by the cost of uniform.

We believe that uniform plays a crucial role in setting the tone for learning and behaviour. A consistent and well-maintained uniform supports our high expectations, promotes a sense of pride and belonging, and reinforces our culture of compliance and respect. It is a visible symbol of our school's values and standards, and we know from experience that it contributes positively to student conduct and engagement.

In response to the DfE's proposed changes, we are planning a minor revision to our PE kit, effective from the 2026/27 academic year. These changes will ensure that we remain compliant with national guidance while continuing to uphold the high standards expected at Ashton. The key adjustments are the replacement of badged shorts/skorts with plain black alternatives, the move to plain black over-the-calf sports socks, and the option for plain black sports leggings instead of the school-branded version. All other items, including

FUTURE PROOFING

the badged training shirt and optional outerwear, will remain unchanged.

These changes are designed to reduce the number of branded items in the PE kit, making it more affordable for families while maintaining a smart and cohesive appearance. We believe this strikes the right balance between compliance with DfE expectations and preserving the identity and standards of our school.

Importantly, we have engaged with student voice throughout this process. Students have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to wear more flexible and cost-effective PE kit items, particularly the option of plain black shorts, skorts, and leggings. However, they also raised valid concerns about the potential for inconsistency in styles and the risk that some students may use branded alternatives as a way to display wealth, which could undermine the inclusive ethos of our school. In response to this feedback, we will ensure that branding on any permitted items is minimal and discreet. To support clarity and consistency, we will also publish visual examples of acceptable plain black items on the school website, helping students and families make informed choices.

Next steps will include communicating these changes to our current suppliers, parents and carers during the Spring Term 2026, updating the school website and uniform policy, and working closely with our uniform suppliers to ensure that all items are available at competitive prices. We will also monitor the impact of these changes on student compliance and gather feedback from families to ensure the transition is smooth and well-received.

Present	2026/27 onwards
P.E.	P.E.
Badged Training Shirt	Badged Training Shirt
Badged Shorts or Badged Skort	Plain Black Shorts or Skort
Reversible Multi-Sports Top (Boys PE curriculum only optional)	Reversible Multi-Sports Top (optional Boys PE curriculum only)
Black/White/Gold Sports Socks	Plain black over-the-calf sports socks
Trainers for indoor and outdoor use with non-marking soles	Trainers for indoor and outdoor use with non-marking soles
Full or Half Zip Badged Jacket (optional)	Full or Half Zip Badged Jacket (optional)
Football/rugby boots (optional)	Football/rugby boots (optional)
Black sports leggings (optional and only available from school)	Plain black sports leggings (optional)

- A revised staffing structure will be presented to the governors finance committee for

FUTURE PROOFING

approval in the spring term. This will reflect the changing needs of the school caused by a potential growth in student numbers, growth in SEND needs and staff movement, including the induction of a new headteacher.

- The move of music provision to the Inspire building and the library into the main school took place over the summer.
- Plans have been submitted for new toilets and changing facilities by the 3G pitch. We await the outcome from Preston City Council.
- We are in negotiation with the Local Authority regarding expanding our published admission number from 160 to 175 from September 2026. This is to meet the projected demand for student places caused by the significant housing development works that are taking place in and around Preston. I hope to bring you more of this in the Spring term meeting, if proposed plans are approved by Cabinet in January.