

Inspection of a good school: Ashton Community Science College

Aldwych Drive, Ashton, Preston, Lancashire PR2 1SL

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 May 2023

Outcome

Ashton Community Science College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are calm and polite. They are happy at school and value the positive relationships that they have with staff. The staff provide a warm welcome for any new pupils who join the school. Most pupils respond well to the high expectations that leaders have of their behaviour and achievement.

Pupils who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the life of the school. As a result, these pupils become confident and independent young people.

Pupils thrive on the wide range of activities available to them. These include sports clubs, music club and the diversity group. The trips that staff organise help to enrich pupils' understanding of the curriculum. These include visits to the Globe Theatre, Bletchley Park and to Paris.

Older pupils make an important contribution to the strong sense of community at the school through the many leadership roles that they undertake. These include running the strategy gaming club or boxing club and as student-support leaders.

Leaders deal effectively with any rare incidents of bullying that occur. Pupils have trusted adults who they can speak to if they have any worries or concerns. This helps them to feel safe.

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

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for the curriculum. They have established an inclusive culture where all pupils, including those in the specially resourced provision, have equal access to a broad range of subjects. Leaders have organised the subject curriculums well. They have thought deeply about the key knowledge that pupils should acquire. Most pupils, including pupils with SEND, are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The number of pupils choosing to study the English Baccalaureate at key stage 4 falls well short of the government's ambition. However, leaders have taken the necessary steps to ensure that this suite of subjects is at the heart of the curriculum. As a result, the number of pupils choosing this pathway has increased.

Teachers use their strong subject knowledge effectively to make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. They use this information well to help pupils to recall previous learning. Most pupils are able to talk confidently and with accuracy about what they have learned.

Most teachers design activities that help pupils, including pupils with SEND, to achieve well. However, sometimes they do not match these activities well to pupils' needs. Consequently, some pupils do not develop a sufficient depth of understanding about some of the subjects that they study.

Leaders have prioritised reading across the school. They accurately identify the needs of less-confident readers as soon as they join the school. They ensure that these pupils quickly gain the knowledge and skills that they need to become confident, fluent readers. This includes support with phonics for those pupils who are at the very early stages of learning to read.

Pupils develop their understanding of the wider world through the books that leaders make available to them. Teachers ensure that pupils read a range of academic texts. This helps pupils to develop their use of technical vocabulary across the subjects that they study.

Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND. They ensure that teachers receive the information that they need to support these pupils so that they can learn well alongside their peers.

Low-level disruption is rare and teachers deal well with any incidents that may occur. Leaders provide effective support for a small number of pupils who need help to improve their behaviour. As a result, most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning, and lessons are free from interruption.

Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils know how to take care of their physical and mental health. They know the importance of developing a positive body image and the signs of a healthy relationship. They learn respect for others through their study of diversity, including different cultures and beliefs. The democratically elected school council plays a key role in making improvements at the school. Leaders ensure that pupils are well informed about the range of courses and careers available to them in the future. As a result, pupils aspire to continue their studies after leaving the school.

Governors hold leaders to account effectively for the quality of education at the school. Staff value the support that leaders provide for their well-being. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise the safety and well-being of pupils. They make the necessary checks on staff and ensure that staff receive the training that they need to spot when pupils may be at risk of harm. Leaders respond promptly to concerns about pupils to ensure that they receive the timely help that they need. This includes working with other agencies when necessary.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive regular safeguarding updates so that they know how to keep themselves safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the activities that teachers design do not help some pupils to develop the depth of knowledge that they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive the support that they need to design activities that help these pupils to develop a deeper understanding of key concepts so that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2018.

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	119707
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10286258
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	860
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Swindells
Headteacher	Sharon Asquith
Website	www.ashtoncsc.lancs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 April 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specially resourced provision for 28 pupils with SEND aged between 11 and 16. These pupils have hearing impairment and speech, language and communication needs. At the time of the inspection, there were 20 pupils on roll in the specially resourced provision.
- Leaders make use of six registered alternative providers and one unregistered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science and history. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the school improvement partner and with members of the local governing body, including the chair and vice-chair of governors.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss the provision for SEND, the curriculum, assessment, pupils' behaviour and attitudes and the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They took account of the responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted's online surveys and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils. They checked a sample of leaders' safeguarding records and reviewed the recruitment checks made on staff.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school life and their views on behaviour and bullying. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Vicky Atherton

Ofsted Inspector

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