

SUMMARY FROM THE HEADTEACHER

The term got off to its usual positive start as far as student engagement is concerned, but we have experienced significant issues with the internet which have caused some disruption to the curriculum, strategic and operational running of the school.

Positive highlights include:

- (1) We welcomed 173 year 7s in September, which is 13 students over our published admission number and an increase of 10 from the 2023 admission number.
- (2) Our speech, language, communication needs (SLCN) unit now has 8 students in years 7 to 10 on commissioned places, with a further 3 students accessing the provision on non-commissioned places.
- (3) Our website is compliant with DFE expectations.

Our open evening was a success, with the usual footfall in the region of 400 families. Keeping our eye on how we market the school is always important, but none more so than now, with the possibility of a new school opening in the district on the Tulketh site and local schools expanding their PAN. Last year, our first-choice applications totalled 173, with a further 101 second choices and 93 third choices. This totals 367 choices for Ashton, indicating we continue to hold our place as a school of choice. We will continue to build on this solid foundation.

- (4) I attended a meeting to discuss our GPA (geographical priority area) with Pupil Access, with the hope that we can shift our boundary to include schools to the west of school, specifically Lea town. I am sorry to report our GPA stays the same.
- (5) Renovation and improvement work has taken place since my last report, including the installation of a sheltered area by the tennis courts, new high-level netting on the 3G pitch, further tarmacking of previously grassed areas, rewiring in the food technology room, repairs to the roof in the Inspire building and new blinds to a number of classrooms.

The start to the new academic year has brought us some challenges too:

- (6) Our expectations for behaviour and learning are at their highest and most of our students respond well to them. However, we have had to make use of suspensions for a small number of students whose behaviour is not changing and who continue to engage in persistently disruptive behaviour. To put the numbers into context, we have 852 students on roll, and at the time of writing, 9 have received a suspension as a sanction in half term 1.
- (7) Sadly, we have had to permanently exclude 1 student this academic year to date
- (8) In October we suffered a DDOS attack. We are working closely with our internet provider, our internet support consultant and the police to try and identify the source of the attack and carry out a full analysis of our provision to identify areas of vulnerability. All the evidence points to an internal source, but finding the culprit has been likened to finding a needle in a haystack by both the police and the IT support teams involved. Nonetheless, we will continue with investigations,

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and I will hopefully have an update for you in my spring report.

ADMISSIONS

Total number of pupils currently on roll = 874

Deaf Support = 15 (20 place unit)

ASD unit = 8 (8 +8 places unit across 2 key stages)

Number who have joined the school – in year admissions:

Autumn term 1a 2024 = 16 (Autumn term 1a 2023 – 12)

Number who have left – in year leavers:

Autumn term 1a 2024 = 10 (Autumn term 1a 2023 = 22)

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

Autumn term 1a 2024 = 4 (Autumn term 1a 2023 = 11)

ATTENDANCE

Attendance data for Half Term 1 2024/25

- Whole school 93.5%
- Absence as % whole school 6.5%
- PA % for WS 21.3%
- Authorised absence % WS 4.3%
- Unauthorised % WS 2.2%

Attendance data for pupil premium cohort Half Term 1 2024/25

- Whole school – 91.0%
- Absence as % whole school 9.0%
- PA % for WS – 39%
- Authorised absence % WS 6.0%
- Unauthorised % WS – 3.0%

Last year's figures for comparison:

Attendance data for Half Term 1 2023/24

- Whole school – 91.1%
- Absence as % whole school – 8.9%
- PA % for WS – 29.1%
- Authorised absence % WS - 6.8%
- Unauthorised % WS – 2.1%

Attendance data for pupil premium cohort Half Term 1 2023/24

- Whole school - 86.8%
- Absence as % whole school – 13.2%
- PA % for WS – 67.5% (% of students who met absence threshold & PP, 171 students in total)
- Authorised absence % WS – 9.5%

ATTENDANCE

- Unauthorised % WS - 3.9%

SAFEGUARDING

Number of safeguarding incidents	Autumn term 1 2024 = 69 Autumn Term 1 2023 = 95
Number of open cases with CSC (Child Protection plan and those open to assessment)	Autumn Term 1 2024 = 5 Autumn term 1 2023 = 4
Safeguarding training	Governor's training was available on the 26/6/24 and have been asked to provide a receipt to acknowledge KCSIE 2024 All staff have completed level 1 and 2 Safeguarding training online with Hays. All staff were provided with an update during the INSET day in September on the changes to KCSIE for September 2024. One of our DDSL's is attending a Neglect workshop on 20/11/24

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

- **Number of pupils on the SEN register** = 176 (20.1%) –61 girls and 115 boys.
- **Number of EHCPs** = 48 (5.4%) National average is 4.8%
- **Number on SEN support** = 128 (14.6%) National average is 13.6%

SEN by need (NB Number of needs are higher than the number on the register because some students have more than one need.)

- ASD – 23
- SLCN – 29
- SpLD – 86
- MLD – 31
- PD – 6
- HI – 18
- VI – 5
- SEMH – 30

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

In terms of good practice, the following are to be noted:

- EHCP GCSE data is improving
- We have really strengthened our KS4 pathways to ensure all students have an appropriate offer.
- We have increased our interventions with evidenced interventions in place to ensure impact is monitored.
- Our QA of support provided by staff has increased and we are holding staff to account more in terms of ensuring the right support strategies are in place.
- Our SEND teacher staffing is now starting to stabilise, particularly in the unit and this is already showing impact; the provision is calmer and this allows for more learning to take place.
- We have specialist TAs in place for core subjects ensuring strong levels of support for that subject.

Number of CLA: 8

BEHAVIOURAL REPORTS

No. of suspensions: 9 (same period last year – 16)

No. of days: 18.5 (same period last year – 47)

No. of students: 9 (same period last year – 12)

No of permanent exclusions: 1 (same period last year – 2)

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND STANDARDS

The release of unvalidated data, which was due in October and would inform governors of how school has performed against a national context, has not occurred due to DFE issues. Please refer to the curriculum and personnel committee documents and minutes for further detail of school's initial analysis of performance, which should be treated with caution because it is internal and based on a sample that is not representative of all schools.

I will report on performance and standards in the Spring Term report.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Fire Evacuation practice

We held our first Fire drill of the 2024- 2025 academic year on 3rd October 2024.

The fire drill alerted us of an unknown fault on the fire panel, which caused the alarm to ring for a couple of seconds and then stop and so the site team would reset it and again it would ring for a couple of seconds then stop. This caused some confusion with the students and slowed down the evacuation. The building was declared empty in 7 minutes 7 seconds, and a full roll call was completed in 2 minutes.

Year Y7 completed the roll call first, which is great as it shows they understood the information we shared with them in form time about the fire drill and ensured they were able to evacuate and register quickly.

Due to the fire panel fault, some doors did not auto release, we called our maintenance company to come out the same day to repair the fault. All doors are tested weekly and working correctly.

The evacuation practice highlighted some improvements that needed to be made, and some re-freshers of information to staff. We asked all staff to re-read our Fire Evacuation Policy, and an information sheet was produced with some of the issues highlighted during the evacuation practice. All staff signed to say they read and understood the information and confirmed their most common evacuation route. We are due to do a full re-test to improve our evacuation time and to ensure any issues or queries have been resolved.

Invacuation practice

An emergency Invacuation/lockdown practice is planned for half term 2

Overview of Accidents and Incidents from Autumn Term 1.

- Member of staff slipped on a spilt water bottle in the dining hall whilst on duty, injuring their back. This continues to be a source of pain for the staff member.
- Member of staff tripped going up the stairs, banging their knee on the next step up.
- Student broke his arm whilst doing a 'muscle up' in the school gym. Full investigation into the accident, concluded a complete freak accident. Pupil did a gym movement and slipped off the bar, which caused his arm to be trapped. As he fell his arm was snapped. Staff first aided him and kept him comfortable until mum collected to take him up to hospital. Hospital confirmed it was broken and required surgery.
- Student was hit by a car when she ran across the road to meet her friends, on Broadway just outside of school. An ambulance was called, and police arrived too due to the nature of the incident. The student sustained only superficial injuries, some bruising, and a bad concussion. Parents extremely thankful for the help and assistance from school staff and we extended thanks to parents who also assisted by moving on traffic and flagging down police and ambulance. An assembly was held on teams, as many students were a witness to the incident, to inform all students the pupil was doing ok. We took the opportunity at that time to remind students of the importance of road safety when travelling to and from school, be that walking or cycling. A letter was also sent home to parents and carers about the incident, and to ask them for support with road safety awareness.
- Student crashed his bike into a stationary car on Aldwych drive. He sustained a bump to the head but was fine. Check out at hospital as a precaution. Returned to school the next day. Another letter was sent home to parents regarding road safety.

Staffing information – starters in September 2024

Name	Role in school	Additional responsibilities/notes
Lauren Barrett	Teacher of Food & Nutrition	Apprentice Teacher
Emily Whitehead	Teacher of Biology	ECT
Lauren Bell	Teacher of DT Food & Nutrition	ECT (Temporary)
Eve Pearson	Teacher of PE	ECT (Temporary)
Laura Dawson	Teacher of MFL	ECT
Cagman Mettham	Unqualified Teacher of EAL	
Kirsten Brooke	Teacher of PE	ECT (Temporary)
Colleen Francis	Teaching Assistant 2B	
Farhin Patel	Teaching Assistant 2B	
Robert Potter	Teaching Assistant 2B	
Ulrike Landherr	Teaching Assistant 2B	
Susan Cole	Teaching Assistant 2B	
Aleena Mohyuddin	Teaching Assistant 2B	
Jack Hottinger	Teaching Assistant 2B	
Lindsay Crozier	Exams Officer	
Josephine Harrison	Behaviour & Support Mentor	
Gary Moloney	Groundsman	Started 19.8.24
Pamela Cummins	Business Manager	Started 19.8.24

STAFFING INFORMATION - LEAVERS DECEMBER 31ST 2023

NAME	ROLE IN SCHOOL	REASON FOR LEAVING
Susan Cole	Teaching Assistant 2B	Move to Primary school
Ulrike Landherr	Teaching Assistant 2B	Personal Circumstances
David Thomas	Teacher of English	Promotion

STAFFING INFORMATION – MATERNITY LEAVE

NAME	ROLE IN SCHOOL	FIRST DAY OF MAT LEAVE
Kirsty Chelton	Associate Assistant Head	04/03/24
Alex Szafranski	Teacher of English (TLR Enrichment on return)	15/04/2024
Bethany Smith	Teacher of PE	04/11/2024

REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT OUTCOMES

All staff have taken part in the annual appraisal cycle, with those eligible for pay progression achieving it.

There are no members of teaching staff on formal support to improve performance. There will be informal discussions about performance this half term with 3 members of support staff.

I cannot provide the latest IDSR statement about staff absence because it has not been released at the time of writing, which means I cannot provide you with a comparison to national data. However, I can report on staff attendance from internal data:

Average attendance 2023/2024

Teachers 94.86%

Support 93.23%

Change between 2022/2023 and 2023/2024

Teachers average % sickness has increased by 0.7 %

Teachers average % LOA's has decreased by 0.93%

Support staff average % sickness has increased by 1.08%

Support staff average % LOA's has increased by 0.18%

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

- (1) We have held one parents evening so far, for year 7. 84% parents attended the evening and 63 parents (36% of the overall cohort) completed the online exit

STAFFING INFORMATION – MATERNITY LEAVE

NAME	ROLE IN SCHOOL	FIRST DAY OF MAT LEAVE
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survey. The results of this, the summary and our response to parents can be found in the appendix at the end of this report.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

The SIP this year extends the work started in previous years, and so the priority areas remain broadly the same, with small changes to the detail within those areas. This is not to say we have not made improvements in these areas, but rather they remain areas of focus for us which will allow us to continue in our improvement journey. They are aligned with the Ofsted framework and reflect the evolving needs of a changing cohort.

They are as follows:

1. Quality of education – reading, catch up and intervention.
2. Quality of education – consistency of classroom experience with high expectations for all, ensuring students make rapid and sustained progress
3. Quality of education – curriculum and assessment
4. Leadership and management –ensuring that teachers receive the support that they need to design activities that help all pupils to develop a deeper understanding of key concepts so that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education (Ofsted report 2023).
5. Leadership and management - Building strong partnerships with parents/families and students through a strengthened personal development offer and improved communication
6. Behaviour and attitudes - Addressing disengagement of students resulting in poor behaviour and poor attendance
7. Culture – implementing strategic improvement plans that support staff and students in embracing the school culture.
8. Leadership and management – Role of governors in holding leaders to account and developing a broader knowledge and understanding of roles and responsibilities

Behind this summary lies a much more detailed plan, based on the Education Endowment foundation (EEF) model, which is tracked by members of SLT monthly. This is attached to this report.

FUTURE PROOFING

A plan is in place to cover the proposed paternity leave of Mr Lee (head of maths) using a combination of supply cover and internal temporary promotions

The reduction in funding caused by the 2 temporary expansion years exiting key stage 4 in 2025 and 2026 is being kept under review, with consideration given to how budget reductions can be achieved through natural movement and restructuring.

Enhanced internet security is being explored to strengthen the school's position against further DDOS or other attacks.

Appendix one – year 7 parents evening survey

Year 7 Parents Evening Parental Questionnaire and Feedback

Thank you for attending and completing parental questionnaires at the Year 7 Parents' Evening on Thursday 7th November. 84% of Year 7 parents attended the parents' evening, and 63 parents completed the online post evening survey.

This information will be used to help us plan future improvements. Here are the results:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
My child enjoys school	49%	51%	-	-	-	
My child feels safe and well cared for at school	62%	36%	2%	-	-	
I am kept well informed about my child's progress	49%	44%	5%	2%	-	
My child gets the right amount of homework to support their learning	32%	60%	6%	2%	-	
School provides a good range of activities outside lesson time (the BOOST programme)	65%	33%	2%	-	-	
School works in close partnership with parents	41%	51%	6%	2%	-	
School encourages high standards of behaviour and attendance	70%	30%	-	-	-	
My child has been bullied and the school dealt with the bullying quickly and effectively	6%	-	-	-	-	94%
School is helping my child become a mature, responsible, and independent young adult	46%	49%	5%	-	-	
School is well led and managed	51%	42%	5%	2%	-	
My child has special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the school gives them the support they need to succeed.	10%	6%	-	2%	-	82%
I engage with synergy and as a result I am able to keep up to date with school information	67%	29%	2%	2%	-	
I would recommend ACSC to other parents	59%	35%	6%	-	-	

You told us these were some of our strengths:

- My child looks forward to going to school every day.
- A wonderful school and great staff.
- Well-structured and honest feedback at parents evening.
- All teachers well organised with comments on progress, behaviour, and assessments.
- Every teacher offered valuable comments, advice, and praise.
- ACSC should continue to maintain the high standards already instilled in the school environment.

- Pleased my child has reading and spelling homework weekly and that I am aware of homework been set.
- Love the BOOST clubs on offer and that they are open to all.
- We already feel like we are part of the ACSC community. No query is too big or small for all staff and they are as much a credit to the school as the young people you are helping to raise and bring into society.
- How my child has settled and made new friends and his good progress into high school life.
- We left the evening more convinced we made the right decision applying to Ashton.

We asked you what we could do to improve. You said:

- A bit too much homework.
- Communication regarding the recent internet outages to fully understand and appreciate the issues.
- Opportunity to speak with form tutors at parents evening.
- A way to provide information of all the apps & websites including log in details when they first start.
- Better communication with some BOOST clubs that go beyond the 4pm finish time.

Here is our response to your feedback:

- Once again, thank you for the positive feedback we have received from you. We really do value your comments. We have tried to speak with every parent who marked disagree or strongly disagree on their survey. If you would like to contact us to discuss any issue further, please do not hesitate to get in touch using the Synergy contact gateway.
- We believe that good communication with parents is essential if our students are to achieve their full potential and we do try to keep parents as up to date as possible. Although we appreciate the recent internet outages have caused an issue with this communication, we are striving to rectify an issue you have with your child at school. Staff will contact parents if there are any specific concerns, either academically or behavioural, or indeed to celebrate students' successes. This will be done through school synergy.
- We may understand concerns about the amount of homework your child is receiving. We appreciate all feedback and want to ensure that our homework policies are balanced and beneficial for all students. We strive to assign homework that is meaningful, manageable, and aligned with our curriculum goals. We regularly review our homework policies to ensure they are appropriate for the age and developmental level of our students. If your child is struggling with their homework, our homework Boost club runs every afternoon in the library until 5pm, which is manned by student leaders and staff, who are on hand to support all students.
- Have you downloaded the new school synergy app, "Synergy Parents," which is available on Android and IOS devices? Synergy Parents gives a real time look at how your child is doing at school including live attendance marks, all behaviour data, and letters from the school. You can even use the app to communicate with the school, liaising with the attendance officer for illness and medical appointments, to contact your child's head of year or a specific teacher, even if it is just a general query. This also includes all communication with BOOST clubs. All parents who have the App, have provided positive feedback so far, so we would encourage you to try it.

- Our website, our newsletter and our Facebook page also provide updates of school life. Parents are welcome to contact school at any time if they have any queries and we will get back to you in a timely manner.

Yours sincerely

Mr Pilkington
Associate Assistant Head