

Ashton Community Science College

Aldwych Drive, Ashton, Preston, Lancashire PR2 1SL

Inspection dates

24–25 April 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- In 2017 pupils' overall progress was broadly average and an improvement on 2016.
- After disappointing GCSE results in 2017 in the subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), leaders and governors immediately took stock and responded swiftly and effectively.
- They used appraisal effectively to improve previously weak areas of teaching and subject leadership. They have ensured that sufficient teaching time is allocated to subjects to meet the demands of examinations.
- School assessments and examples of pupils' work analysed by inspectors indicate that rates of progress of pupils currently in Year 11 are better than those seen in 2017. They also show that those subjects which performed well in 2017 continue to do so.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' assessments show that the progress that pupils make in Years 7 to 10 is good across the majority of subjects, including EBacc subjects.
- Subject leaders have utilised the support from examination boards, the local authority and local school networks to plan effective programmes of work and ensure the accuracy of assessment.
- The majority of teaching is effective. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants give good support to lower-attaining pupils.
- Sometimes the activities which teachers plan for pupils of higher and middle ability are not challenging enough. At times teachers give some of these pupils too much support.
- Leaders use funding very well to support disadvantaged pupils. Their progress improves year on year but those who do not attend regularly miss important opportunities to learn and achieve.
- Most pupils are keen to learn. However, some boys do not take enough care with handwriting and the organisation of their work.
- The use of funding for literacy and numeracy in Year 7 is not fully effective in helping lower-attaining pupils to catch up quickly. However, the pace of their progress increases as good teaching meets their needs as they move up the school.
- Behaviour in lessons and at social times is good. The behaviour of disadvantaged pupils has improved markedly.
- All staff prioritise the welfare of pupils, especially the most vulnerable.
- Recent decisions made by leaders and governors have resulted in a well-balanced curriculum which now offers more academic challenge.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - continuing to share the school’s best practice so that learning activities consistently challenge pupils of higher and middle ability to make rapid progress in their learning
 - raising expectations of how boys present and organise their work.
- Continue the school’s tenacious work with disadvantaged pupils and their parents and carers, to further improve their attendance so that their increased rates of progress are sustained.
- Use the funding provided to support pupils who need to catch up in English and mathematics to better effect in Year 7.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, governors, leaders and staff at all levels show a commitment and determination to enable the pupils in their care to achieve their best. This has resulted in honest and open self-evaluation, the admission of mistakes and swift planning to rectify the issues that have slowed pupils' progress in the past.
- Leaders and governors quickly analysed the reasons for the disappointing 2017 GCSE results in English, mathematics, humanities, languages and science. After consultation with staff, they concluded that one of the most significant factors was too little curriculum time dedicated to English, mathematics and science. They immediately increased the number of lessons allocated to these subjects across all year groups, but especially in Year 11.
- Leaders also took swift action, including using teacher appraisal and continuing professional development, to improve subject leadership and teaching. They ensured that teachers and subject leaders had the opportunity to work with examination boards, the local authority and other schools. This enabled staff to benefit from external moderation to secure the accuracy of assessments. It also allowed them to consolidate their understanding of the demands of the new GCSE examinations.
- This year there have been changes in the leadership of modern foreign languages and science. These have resulted in improved teaching and curriculum planning. The impact on pupils' progress is clear. There is, however, still some inconsistency in the teaching of history as leaders have yet to secure a permanent member of staff to lead developments in this department.
- Middle leaders have played a key role in making the improvements that have been necessary to improve pupils' outcomes. They have challenged and supported members of staff when teaching has not been strong enough. Senior leaders regularly hold middle leaders to account for standards in their areas of responsibility. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors took account of the views of middle leaders when making the changes, which have resulted in higher standards for current pupils.
- Leaders have put in place strong systems for monitoring the quality of teaching. They use a wide range of indicators such as lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' assessments and the views of pupils. They use appraisal and continuing professional development well to ensure that teaching allows pupils to make good progress.
- Good-quality plans for the spending of the pupil premium funding identify the specific difficulties which disadvantaged pupils face. Leaders have carefully matched the support that disadvantaged pupils receive to any personal barriers to learning that they face. They use funding appropriately to provide skilled pastoral support as well as academic guidance. The school also ensures that financial difficulties do not prevent disadvantaged pupils from participating in extra-curricular activities.
- Staff prioritise the families of disadvantaged pupils when communicating with parents and carers about important meetings and pupils' attendance. They persevere until they

receive a response. Despite the school's best efforts, some disadvantaged pupils do not attend as regularly as their peers and, as a result, fall behind in their studies.

- Staff gather and rigorously analyse performance information in relation to pupils who enter the school in Year 7 with low levels of literacy and numeracy. However, the funding for this group is not having a speedy enough impact on their progress in Year 7. Nevertheless, good teaching of lower-attaining pupils as they move up the school meets their needs and increases their rates of progress.
- Only a small number of pupils are on the register for those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Leaders use the funding for this group well so that these pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. The special educational needs coordinator and senior leaders organise and manage support efficiently and utilise the support of external specialists to guide them on the best ways to assist pupils who have specific learning needs. This advice is used effectively and helps staff to meet the needs of these pupils.
- Staff in the unit for pupils whose hearing is impaired are well qualified and experienced. They provide a nurturing environment and good-quality support. They meet the needs of these pupils well and ensure that they achieve their full potential.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to study compulsory subjects and choose additional subjects which interest them or for which they have an aptitude. Recent changes have ensured that the curriculum is now more academically demanding. For example, pupils can no longer study for the European computer driving licence qualification.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Activities such as mock elections and real elections of form captains help them to understand aspects of British society such as democracy.
- The school improvement partner from the local authority knows the school very well. He has conducted useful reviews and made appropriate recommendations. Subject leaders speak highly of the support they receive from subject networks facilitated by the local authority. Middle and senior leaders also value participating in two teaching school alliances. The headteacher benefits from a local network of secondary headteachers. The comprehensive nature of this support has helped leaders to address the weaknesses in pupils' outcomes from the last two years.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. The governing body fulfils all its legal responsibilities, including those related to safeguarding. Governors are committed to the school and give their time freely. They bring a range of professional skills to their role. A programme of visits to the school and regular briefings from middle and senior leaders ensure that they know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. For several years the school's budget was in deficit. Governors have managed this well so that it is now balanced. They do not shy away from difficult staffing decisions. They hold school leaders to account very effectively in areas such as buildings and finance. They are beginning to challenge leaders more effectively in relation to teaching, the curriculum and pupils' progress in response to the challenges posed by the decline in outcomes over the last two years.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors prioritise the safety of pupils and the school is an extremely vigilant community. All policies and procedures are up to date and reflect the latest national guidance. Leaders undertake appropriate checks before they make appointments to the school. Staff have undertaken training in relation to all aspects of safeguarding and are clear which procedures to follow should they have concerns. They use effective links with external agencies when the school requires specialist expertise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The majority of teaching effectively meets pupils' needs. Teachers work hard to help every individual to succeed. Pupils who completed the Ofsted survey or were chosen for discussion with inspectors were complimentary about the commitment and skill of their teachers.
- In most subjects teachers are well-qualified specialists who plan well to meet the needs of pupils and the demands of external examinations and the national curriculum. Teachers use their subject knowledge to frame thought-provoking questions which deepen pupils' understanding and clarify misconceptions. In humanities a small amount of teaching by non-specialists is less effective but the school has appointed more specialists for next academic year.
- Middle leaders devise well-planned programmes of work and assessment to promote good progress. These programmes allow teachers to use accurate assessment to match work to pupils' capabilities and prior attainment. Teachers support least-able pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities well. Usually the work that teachers set challenges all abilities. However, sometimes the activities they choose do not stretch pupils of middle and higher ability, and sometimes they give these pupils too much support. This results in inconsistent progress for some of these pupils.
- Other adults, such as teaching assistants, make an important contribution to teaching. They are skilled at helping individuals and groups to make good progress. They use questioning well to develop pupils' understanding.
- Teachers set homework which builds on work started in lessons. Teachers are tenacious in challenging pupils who do not complete the work they are supposed to do at home.
- Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Consequently, the vast majority of lessons flow smoothly without interruption. Routines which teachers have carefully established also contribute to maximising the lesson time available.
- A small number of teachers, mostly relatively new to the school, do not make sure that pupils sustain concentration to the end of lessons. However, leaders are aware of this and are sharing best practice to eliminate time wasting in a minority of lessons.
- Pupils work hard and are keen to succeed. They arrive at lessons promptly and with the necessary equipment. They enjoy talking in pairs and groups to share ideas and

deepen their understanding. However, a considerable number of boys do not pay sufficient attention to neatness and accuracy in written work and do not organise their work well for revision.

- The school has appropriate policies for the development of numeracy and literacy across the curriculum. Teachers prioritise skills specific to the subject they are teaching but they expect grammatically correct writing and accurate spelling. They use numeracy well to support learning in science and geography.
- Teachers use very good strategies to develop pupils' correct use of subject-specific terminology. They insist that pupils use this terminology orally and in writing. As a result, pupils produce appropriately sophisticated writing and are well prepared for examinations.
- Teachers' implementation of the school's marking policy allows pupils to use feedback to improve their work. This is particularly effective when feedback relates to GCSE grade criteria.
- A wide range of academic, sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities enhances pupils' learning and develops resilience and positive attitudes to learning.
- Parents have the opportunity to attend meetings to discuss pupils' progress in detail. Teachers give parents regular written information about how their children are progressing and how they might support learning at home. Parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, indicate that they feel that the information provided is comprehensive and useful.
- Governors, staff and pupils celebrate diversity in all its forms. One comment from a pupil typified views: 'It doesn't matter what people are, it's what's on the inside that counts.' Teaching resources reflect pupils' backgrounds and build their knowledge of cultures, lifestyles and religions beyond their own experience. Pupils chosen for interview said that derogatory language is never heard in the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school achieves its aim to 'develop students who understand their responsibilities as members of the school, local and wider communities and who should expect and want to make a positive contribution to those communities.' Pupils enjoy raising money for charity and supporting events in the local community.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills. They are keen to take on responsibilities such as being members of the school council. They told inspectors that school leaders listen to them and make changes in the light of their views.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in the school. They know which staff to turn to should they feel vulnerable or be worried on behalf of others.
- Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, form time and themed days give pupils the knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe from physical and emotional

harm. Staff and visitors teach them about the dangers of social networking, mobile technology and being online. Teachers alert them to dangers such as child sexual exploitation and extremism. Outside agencies, including the police, contribute to assemblies and themed days to raise awareness of risks which pupils may encounter in the local community.

- The school has invested in building a skilled team of pastoral staff, counsellors and mentors who nurture and monitor vulnerable pupils. This staff team provides reliable and effective support for pupils whose emotional well-being is at risk.
- The school has developed a wide-ranging programme of PSHE which is well led and monitored. Teachers and visiting specialists make pupils aware of how to eat well and achieve and maintain physical and emotional health. Teachers meet to check that the programme is up to date and to plan for raising awareness of new developments.
- School records and the views of parents and pupils show that bullying is very rare. On the few occasions when bullying occurs staff are quick to deal with it and ensure that there is no repetition.
- Pupils have access to a well-organised programme of careers information, education, advice and guidance (CIEAG) which begins in Year 7. School staff and careers advisors deliver this programme as part of PSHE, during 'challenge days' and in regular form-time sessions. Staff from local colleges, businesses and training providers visit the school to ensure that pupils are aware of all local opportunities. On the school's website there are good links to information about apprenticeships. As a result of effective CIEAG, pupils make informed choices about which optional subjects to study in key stage 4 and where to continue their education when they leave the school.
- For the small number of pupils who are fully or partly educated off-site, the school has clear and effective arrangements in place to ensure attendance and well-being. The school checks regularly that these pupils are behaving well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Relationships among pupils and between pupils and staff are very positive and based on mutual respect.
- Pupils respect the school environment and wear their uniform, and badges that denote their achievements and responsibilities, with pride.
- Pupils, staff and parents all agree that the new behaviour policy has had a positive impact. Pupils understand the reasons for rewards and sanctions, and respond very well to the system of 'grumpy faces' and 'smiley faces'. Staff do not award 'smiley faces' for simply following school rules. They only give them when pupils demonstrate behaviour which is particularly impressive. Pupils are highly motivated by the innovative rewards for which they can 'trade in smiley faces'. These rewards involve healthy pursuits, such as dog walking, which emphasise that enjoyable activities do not have to cost money.

- Staff log, track and analyse the behaviour of pupils regularly. Consequently, they act swiftly and intervene effectively when there are signs that the behaviour of individuals or groups is beginning to deteriorate.
- School records show that since the implementation of the new behaviour policy the number of sanctions, including internal isolation, has decreased markedly. This is especially true in the case of disadvantaged pupils, who previously were much more likely to be sanctioned than their peers. As a result of strategies funded by the pupil premium, this is no longer the case. Disadvantaged pupils are now less likely to misbehave than non-disadvantaged pupils. School records and case studies show clearly that the behaviour of disadvantaged pupils has improved enormously in the last 18 months.
- In almost all lessons, pupils follow instructions immediately and waste no time. Only a very small minority lose concentration occasionally towards the end of lessons.
- Outside lessons the atmosphere is calm and orderly. Pupils are courteous and, even when space is limited, careful not to bump into others. They understand the school's high expectations and respond to them.
- Overall attendance is slightly above the national average. The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent is lower than historic national figures. Staff check absence daily and contact parents. They do not hesitate to recommend penalty notices when appropriate. The number of parents who take their children on holiday in term time has decreased this year as a result of the school's strong approach to challenging unnecessary absence.
- Staff have been tenacious in working with families to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Staff's determination has led to marked improvement in the response of the parents of disadvantaged pupils to invitations to meetings and events. This hard work has made some improvement to the attendance of this group. In particular, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent is now considerably lower than that of their peers. However, the overall attendance of pupils in this group remains lower than that of others in school and so some disadvantaged pupils miss valuable opportunities to learn and achieve.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2017 the overall progress made by pupils across eight subjects was similar to that made by pupils across the country who achieved similar results at the end of Year 6. In this respect results were an improvement on 2016, when overall progress was below average.
- In a range of optional subjects in 2017, pupils made more progress than average. However, they did not achieve the results of which they were capable in the subjects which make up the EBacc: English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and humanities.
- The actions of school leaders to increase curriculum time in English, mathematics and science has had a positive impact. Good use of appraisal and continuing professional development to improve teaching and subject leadership have also led to improved progress.

- Scrutiny of pupils' work and rigorously moderated internal assessments indicate that in all the EBacc subjects the progress of pupils currently in Year 11 is good and already considerably better than that seen last year. Progress in mathematics has returned to the good levels seen previously, when the school was in the top 20% nationally for progress.
- The improvement in all EBacc subjects was also evident in the work of pupils in Years 7 to 10.
- Rigorous moderation and standardisation involving examination boards shows clearly that teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment are accurate.
- Lower-ability pupils make consistently good progress across the school. Leaders have made it a priority to develop teaching so that it consistently meets the needs of middle- and higher-ability pupils. To this end, they have created systematic opportunities for teachers to share ideas on how to challenge these groups effectively. They have also enlisted support from two teaching schools to sharpen this aspect of teaching. This has ensured that most of these pupils are now reaching their full potential. However, some still have not attained levels appropriate to their starting points.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve. This is evident in all year groups, but particularly in Year 10. Despite this, disadvantaged pupils still have not caught up with their non-disadvantaged peers. This is especially true of the small number of disadvantaged pupils who continue to not attend school regularly.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities learn well and make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Strategies to increase reading for pleasure have had a positive impact. The number of books borrowed from the library has increased considerably. Opportunities for silent reading are built into the school day and pupils said that they like reading during these quiet times. In a number of lessons inspectors witnessed pupils of a range of abilities reading out loud with confidence and enjoyment. The pupils who inspectors chose to read to them individually did so with comprehension, fluency and accuracy.
- Last year the proportion of pupils that went on to education, employment or training at the end of Year 11 was above historic national averages. This indicates that pupils were well prepared for the next steps in their education, despite many not attaining the grades they were capable of achieving in their final examinations.

School details

Unique reference number	119707
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10046700

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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	638
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Doolan
Headteacher	Sharon Asquith
Telephone number	01772 513002
Website	www.ashtoncsc.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	head@ashtoncsc.com
Date of previous inspection	2–3 October 2013

Information about this school

- Ashton Community Science College is smaller than most secondary schools.
- The number of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is larger than average.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for SEN and/or disabilities is small in comparison with the national figure. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is higher than the national average.
- In 2017 the school met the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

- For a small number of pupils the school uses alternative provision at Preston's College, Larches House PRU, Larches Medical, Preston Vocational Centre and Tower Learning.
- The school is a member of Preston Teaching School Alliance and Ripley Teaching School Alliance. The school is also a member of a local collaborative group for headteachers.
- The school has a resource base which caters for 13 pupils who have hearing impairment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe teaching and pupils' learning. Some of these lesson observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors met formally with seven groups of pupils. An inspector heard a range of pupils read. Inspectors also considered 57 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, middle and senior leaders. They took account of 44 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors had discussions with members of the governing body and the school improvement adviser from Lancashire local authority.
- Inspectors took account of a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of the school's information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' books and assessment information.
- Inspectors considered 31 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire), including 27 free-text comments.

Inspection team

Liz Kelly, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Stott	Ofsted Inspector

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