

# Ashmount School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120352
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	358742
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 February 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jo Curd

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	76
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jean Lewis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dave Thomas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 April 2008
<b>School address</b>	Beacon Road Loughborough LE11 2BG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01509 268506
<b>Fax number</b>	01509 231605
<b>Email address</b>	office@ashmount.leics.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Twelve lessons were observed and eight teachers seen. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, parents, carers, pupils and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, local authority report, pupils' work, assessments, documents relating to safeguarding the health and safety of pupils. Inspectors analysed 27 questionnaires from parents and carers, 25 from staff and 57 from pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Given the highly challenging nature of some of the pupils' difficulties and disabilities how good is behaviour across the school?
- How well is the curriculum enriched for all groups of pupils given the relatively small numbers of pupils attending lunchtime and after-school clubs?
- How well is the school's highly extensive, lengthy and ambitious development plan used by leaders and managers at all levels?

## Information about the school

Pupils at this relatively small school have a range of special educational needs and disabilities including severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and sensory impairment. Over half the pupils have severe learning difficulties, over a third have autistic spectrum disorders and a high proportion have associated medical conditions. A small number of students with moderate learning difficulties join the sixth form. A greater proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals than in most other schools. A small proportion of pupils are looked after by the local authority. The headteacher joined the school in September 2009 a year after the current deputy headteacher. In May 2010 the school attained Healthy Schools Status. In September 2010 it was granted specialist status for cognition and learning.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

Given their starting points, difficulties and disabilities all groups of pupils thrive in this outstanding school. They are extremely well cared for and taught exceedingly well by teachers, visiting specialists and classroom support assistants. The vast majority of parents and carers are very appreciative of all the school offers them and their children. As one, reflecting the feelings of most, said, 'The school goes from strength to strength each year and always meets and exceeds my expectations for my child.'

Pupils are cared for extremely effectively because staff work so well together. Weekly training, open communication and a very effective use of the school development plan have all contributed to this. All members of staff are passionate about striving for the very best for each student. For example, developing links between classes both within and between schools, holding lunchtime clubs and an evening youth club and developing the school's grounds to offer even more space and experiences for all. Relatively small attendance at the clubs is a bonus for some pupils and their introduction provides even more opportunities and choice for all. Behaviour is excellent because pupils are so well cared for and supported. The school is calm and disruptions are minimal. Pupils are strongly and effectively encouraged to make choices and be as independent as possible. Opportunities, particularly at a younger age, for them to contribute to the school and wider community are less frequent.

Specialist status in cognition and learning has very successfully strengthened the school's emphasis on pupil learning and development which is central to all that it does. Frequent and very rigorous lesson monitoring has successfully raised the quality of teaching and progress. Funding from specialist status has been used to purchase short-shadow projectors for interactive white boards and blackout blinds for all rooms, extending opportunities for pupils to use technology and ensures the accommodation is suitable for all.

Systems and procedures are strengths of the school and central to its improvement. These are thorough, robust and highly effective. The school development plan is extremely extensive and all-encompassing. It is firmly based on highly accurate self-evaluation and used very successfully to focus and direct leaders so that they can develop many aspects of the school simultaneously. Very tight, proactive and meticulously recorded procedures to safeguard the health and safety of all pupils are also firmly in place.

Given the passion of staff, the focus of leaders, the effectiveness of systems and developments so far, the capacity to sustain improvement is outstanding.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Over the next two terms provide more opportunities for all pupils, including the younger ones, to contribute to the school and wider community.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

All groups of pupils achieve very well and there are no significant differences between them. They are all highly vulnerable. Many have associated medical conditions and some are ill or hospitalised for considerable lengths of time. Taking this into account, attendance is broadly in line with national averages. Pupils enjoy their learning and engage well. For example, a wide range of pupils in Key Stage 3 used various tools and materials to decorate boxes for special items. One pupil with profound autism used symbols to ask for the colour of paper he wanted and made excellent progress in sticking a mosaic of shiny paper on his box. A girl with severe learning difficulties in another class made huge progress during a visit to the library. This was seen in her recall and retelling, with limited words and very animated actions, the story she had just heard. On this same visit another girl recognised and read some words in a new book which she chose and a boy with profound and multiple learning difficulties moved his arms up and down with great concentration and excitement at the story. Excellent learning and activities, such as visiting the library, singing club and riding bicycles and tricycles, all help prepare pupils for later life. Given their starting points, pupils develop excellent attitudes to health through regular physical activity in lessons and break times and their understanding of a healthy diet. Their facial expressions, demeanours and where possible, verbal comments, indicate just how very safe they feel in this secure and supportive environment. Despite the fact that some pupils find life particularly challenging, behaviour is excellent, so that classrooms are generally calm and learning continuous.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

## How effective is the provision?

Excellent teaching underpins and permeates the very high levels of progress all groups of pupils make. The quality of all lessons seen during the inspection was at least good and over half was outstanding. Planning is rooted in an exceedingly good understanding of the pupils and ambitious targets for the next steps of their learning. This was clearly evident in a mathematics lesson with some of the younger pupils. They were grouped particularly well so that the teacher and classroom assistants could tailor their teaching to meet individual needs. The teacher worked with two of the more-able pupils with severe learning difficulties. Assessments from the month before showed that one pupil had found counting difficult. By this lesson she was counting, using and recognising numbers to eight and using these to make a large scale bar chart made with string and cones on the floor. This typifies teaching across the school where classroom assistants are used exceedingly effectively, tasks are matched to pupils' needs particularly well and activities are practical, suitable and engaging.

The curriculum is broad and covers all the required areas. Excellent partnerships with outside specialists supplement the school's competent staff. Staff work hard and successfully overcome challenges presented by the size and layout of the building. They make the most of every room and move partitions to create suitable spaces for individual

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work in order to meet the needs of all groups. Funding from the school's specialist status has been used well to make accommodation more suitable and to extend resources to meet the needs of all groups. Pupils' experiences are further enriched through visits out, participation in local events, clubs and residential trips.

All groups of pupils are supported very well. Staff training to meet personal, medical and learning needs is given a high priority. The experienced nurse who is full-time at the school contributes greatly to staff training so that she and a range of staff can meet individual medical needs well. An example of her valuable contribution to pupils' learning was seen when she administered medicine to settle the gastro refluxes of an older pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties while she continued with a science lesson, holding and looking at a strawberry.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders' very sharp focus on cognition and learning is at the centre of all that the school does. Frequent, challenging, lesson monitoring with feedback which encourages teachers to reflect on their own work and a very strong emphasis on matching work to pupils' needs, has successfully raised the quality of teaching, learning and progress. Systems and procedures, including those to safeguard pupils' health and safety, are very thorough and robust. These are highly transparent and frequently discussed and developed by staff. Consequently, approaches and views are increasingly consistent and all staff feel involved and valued. Morale is high. Inspection questionnaires from staff were unanimously positive. Detailed monitoring, very accurate self-evaluation and high ambitions for all promote equality and tackle discrimination very successfully. The governing body is rigorous in its evaluation and development of the school. Members are highly involved, very supportive, challenging and proactive. They are well aware of the difficulties of engaging parents and carers who live across a very wide area and are leading the way in soliciting their views at parents' evenings and beginning to arrange more family events. Very strong partnerships with other professionals and organisations contribute strongly to the curriculum and extended opportunities for all pupils. The school plays a particularly active role in promoting cohesion and equality for those with disabilities across various groupings locally, nationally and internationally. This is based on a detailed audit and evaluated thoroughly to guide further projects and initiatives. Current work includes partnerships with mainstream schools and forging links with special schools abroad.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

All the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage progress very well in this very welcoming caring environment. This is inspired, led and managed extremely well. Relationships are excellent and teamwork is strong. Receiving and giving training is given a high priority. In this way staff both hone and share their expertise. Very consistent approaches to behaviour management and the constant use of speech, symbols and sign contribute to a settled peaceful class. Staff use their knowledge and frequent observations of each child extremely well to plan activities and interact in their play. Activities are very imaginative promoting learning across the six areas of learning inside and out. For example, children developed their creative, physical, language and number skills extremely well during the inspection as they moved, or were helped to move, their bodies and joined in with number songs about an astronaut, made aliens from clay and counted these together. Assessment booklets provide accurate, detailed and vivid records of what children have done and point the way for what they need to learn or do next. Home/school diaries are used very effectively, enabling a partnership, informing parents and carers what children have done at school and allowing them to contribute achievements from home.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Sixth form

The well-focused and ambitious coordinator has enabled staff to improve the sixth form effectively and quickly. Relationships are excellent. Students are very positive about school and learning. They work hard and support each enthusiastically. They respond very well to a highly personalised curriculum and realistic but ambitious expectations of staff. All are vulnerable and illness continues to keep some away, attendance is in line with national averages. Positive attitudes and hard work help them all gain accreditations including ASDAN bronze, silver and towards independence awards and, wherever appropriate, entry level qualifications. These qualifications are accessible but challenging for all the students, enabling them to follow various pathways as they leave. Almost all go on to further education or specialist colleges. Carefully planned activities based on frequent, detailed and accurate assessments keep students motivated and engaged, for example, in making 'Puck Valentine's Day' posters as part of a very inspiring lesson exploring and discussing Shakespeare. Another group of students made excellent progress physically and in literacy and health as they learned to make sandwiches safely following instructions written in text and symbols. Students develop confidence and skills for later life as they participate in a range of valuable work experience, such as in local shops, an animal sanctuary and the school's early years class. They enjoy their break times in the common room where they can relax, make drinks and play pool. Choice, cooperation and independence were all fostered extremely well as they decided together how to spend £300 budget from the school. They are now enjoying their Karaoke machine.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

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## **Views of parents and carers**

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire is in line with that of other special schools. The overwhelming majority of responses to nearly all the questions are positive. The majority are very pleased with almost all areas investigated. Almost all are very happy with their child's experience at this school. Inspectors found the engagement of parents and carers to be good. A tiny minority expressed some concerns: these centred on the way the school meets individual needs particularly of very vulnerable pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Inspectors investigated these concerns through discussion and observation. They found staff work very well to care for individual needs, that pupils are generally grouped very well, that pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are supported effectively and make very good progress. Inspectors noted that other parents and carers of children with autistic spectrum disorders are very pleased with provision and outcomes.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashmount School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 27 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 76 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	85	4	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	81	5	19	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	22	81	4	15	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	78	5	19	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	81	5	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	70	8	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	70	8	30	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	16	59	9	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	78	5	19	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	74	7	26	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	78	6	22	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	74	6	23	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	92	2	8	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



16 February 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Ashmount School, Loughborough, LE11 2BG**

We were pleased to meet so many of you when we visited your school recently. It was good to see you working and playing at so many interesting things. We particularly enjoyed talking to many of you, sitting with some of you and watching others ride bicycles and tricycles outside.

Thank you for the questionnaires you returned. We are very pleased that you are so positive about the school. Your movements and smiles also showed us how much you enjoy it there. We also think that it's a great place for your learning. We have said that it is outstanding which means it is extremely good. You are cared for and taught very well by teachers and classroom support assistants. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are looked after very well and benefit from a wide range of activities. Those in the sixth form have interesting lessons and learn to relax and do some things themselves in their common room. Total communication, that is speech and sign, helps you all develop your speech and language further.

Although you are all encouraged to be as independent as possible you do not all have as many opportunities to contribute, that is to help, in your school and your local area. We have therefore asked that over the next two terms opportunities for this are increased for you all, especially for those who are younger.

All of you can all help by taking part in these opportunities as they arise.

With very best wishes to you and your families.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Curd

Lead inspector

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