

Ashby School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	120303
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	379993
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2012
Lead inspector	David Martin HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	14–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1670
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	600
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elaine Blunt
Headteacher	Eddie Green
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2009
School address	Nottingham Road Ashby-de-la-Zouch LE65 1DT
Telephone number	01530 413748
Fax number	01530 560665
Email address	admin@ashbyschool.org.uk

Boarding provision	School House
Social care unique reference number	SC001838
Social care inspector	Joanne Vyas

Age group	14–19
Inspection date(s)	16–17 May 2012
Inspection number	379993



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Introduction

Inspection team

David Martin	Her Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Spoors	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Needham	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Pentlow	Additional Inspector
Hermione Horn	Additional Inspector
Joanne Vyas	Additional Inspector
Trevor Hall	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 51 lessons or substantial parts of lessons, taught by 50 different teachers. They also made shorter visits to registration periods, an assembly, the library, and to sample support groups and other activities. Meetings were held with groups of students, teaching staff and leaders and managers, including three representatives of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of school documentation and records. These included: minutes of meetings and planning documents; assessment and examination records; attendance records and those relating to behaviour and exclusion; records relating to the safeguarding of students. Inspectors scrutinised the 299 parental questionnaires received as well as those from students and staff.

Information about the school

Ashby School is much larger than the average secondary school serving a wide area of North-West Leicestershire. It includes a boys' boarding house for 70 students aged 11-18, many of whom are from other countries; the four youngest students attend other local schools. Most students are White British. A below average proportion of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds, or speak a first language other than English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is around half the national figure. A smaller proportion of students than average are supported at school action plus or have statements of special educational need. The school has specialist status in technology and modern foreign languages. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school holds full International School status, Sports Mark, Healthy Schools status, the Silver Eco School award and has been an Investors In People (IIP) school since 1997. School House was recognised by the local authority as a full extended services school in 2008. A new headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body were appointed in September 2011.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Ashby is a good school, with a good sixth form. The school is not outstanding because recent improvements to teaching have not been fully embedded to ensure strong, sustained progress over time for all students.
- School House is outstanding in every respect. Boarders make excellent academic and personal progress. Their behaviour is exemplary; they treat each other and adults with care, respect and understanding. Staff are passionate about their roles, are professional and caring.
- Students achieve well in the school from their starting points. This is particularly true at Key Stage 4, where attainment has been significantly above average for some time. In the sixth form, recent changes led to much improved performance at AS level in 2011. Indication from school assessments show that this improvement will also be seen at A level this year.
- Teaching is mainly good. There are considerable strengths in teachers' subject knowledge and the unstinting support that they offer to students. Not all lessons offer opportunities for students to take the initiative and work independently. Assessment practice, although developing, could be more varied and used more consistently to increase the pace of learning.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning and their behaviour is very good in classrooms and around the site. Students feel, and school procedures ensure that they are kept, exceptionally safe. Attendance is improving strongly but remains broadly average. Although students have good moral and social development, their spiritual development and understanding of life in multicultural Britain is more limited.
- The recently appointed headteacher has already made a notable impact on the school. He has brought a clear vision and drive that has been greatly appreciated by staff. In particular, he has quickly identified areas of weakness

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in performance, changed the way that the school operates and made significant impact in these areas. This includes the achievement of potentially more vulnerable groups. He has strengthened the leadership of teaching and learning and made performance management more challenging, while offering support for change.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make learning more consistently good or better by:
 - giving increased opportunities for students to be independent learners and to take more initiative in all classrooms
 - increasing the range of strategies used by teachers to assess students' progress in the classroom, using this information to accelerate learning.
- Prepare students even more effectively for life in a multicultural society by:
 - making students' understanding of national issues as strong as their current understanding of the local and international community
 - planning for a wider range of opportunities for spiritual awareness across the curriculum.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Progress is overwhelmingly good, as parents and carers agree. The great majority of lessons are characterised by the following features: there are excellent relationships between students and with their teachers; lessons proceed with a good pace with very little time wasted; students are enthusiastic and productive. They achieve well in a range of subjects across the curriculum. In some of the better lessons, students use potentially hazardous or expensive materials maturely and safely. In a media lesson, for example, students independently recorded summaries of their work using cameras and editing software, with little technical guidance required from the teacher.

At Key Stage 4, students make progress that is better than that seen in most schools. A slight dip in performance in mathematics in 2011 has been remedied this year through concerted action by leaders, managers and teaching staff. The performance of students known to be eligible for free school meals has improved from well below average in 2011 and is projected to be above average for this group nationally in 2012. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs also make good progress because their particular difficulties are known or identified early and effective support is put in place. The tracking of potentially vulnerable groups has greatly improved this year and the curriculum has been adjusted to provide appropriate learning experiences for those who may find a totally academic

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diet difficult. Parents and students commented very warmly on the way that the 'Commit to Success' (C2S) initiative has had a significant impact on progress for some who were in danger of becoming disengaged.

In the sixth form, standards declined slightly over the last three years at A level, but improved at AS level and are significantly above average. Indications, including those from modular assessment, show that both A level and AS level results will be above average in 2012 and that current progress is good. In addition, success and completion rates in the sixth form are much better than in most schools, with the overwhelming majority of students going on to higher education, further education, training or employment.

Boarders make particularly good progress academically, with the great majority going on to higher education. There are notable success stories where students who have not had great success prior to joining the boarding facility have had their academic achievement turned around spectacularly.

Quality of teaching

The large majority of teaching seen during the inspection was good. The school has recently stepped up the support for the development of teaching practice. This has included significant professional development training, coaching and the sharing of best practice. The impact can already be seen in improved teaching. Parents, carers and students overwhelmingly agree that most teaching is good but that there is some variability in quality across the school. Generally, sessions are well planned, with good links made to prior learning and next steps. What is less evident in many lessons is teachers' use of a variety of techniques to check how much is being learned, and subsequent action to make progress even quicker for different groups of students. There were good examples of assessment seen during the inspection but this was inconsistent. In a drama session, the teacher skilfully assessed students' responses to making actions and facial expressions comical. By modelling exactly what she was looking for, she was able to significantly improve students' understanding and their physical actions.

There were many examples of teachers' excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects. There were many good examples of effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). For example, a 'disappearing' projected word blank created a real sense of fun and pace to a 'view and recall' activity. In another lesson, interactive whiteboard materials were emailed directly to students so that they could follow the work up afterwards. There were also good examples where students were given opportunities to take initiative during lessons. Paired work on 'carbon footprints' led to students challenging each other about their own carbon footprint, helping them to make rapid progress in understanding. In other lessons, there were missed opportunities and occasions when activities, discussion and presentation were over-dominated by the teacher. Teaching promoted students' social development and challenged them to think deeply about moral issues, but opportunities were missed for exploring spirituality and cultural themes. Teaching for

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students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is strong due to the speedy identification of their particular needs and effective support from teachers and other staff.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Responses from parents and carers indicated that almost all felt that students were kept safe and were unanimous in praising the support given to students by staff. Inspection evidence, including the views of students themselves fully supported this. The potential hazard of crossing between sites, mentioned by a small number of parents and carers, was not a problem on the inspection. The area was well supervised and students used the crossing maturely and sensibly. Behaviour and attitudes to learning were excellent and very few parents and carers raised any concerns. School records and discussions with students indicated that this is typically the case. Incidents of bullying are rare, and students were confident that the school dealt effectively with any incidents that did occur. Students showed a good understanding of different types of bullying, including 'cyber-bullying' and that based on prejudice, including homophobic bullying. Students felt that the school gave very good advice and information related to issues of concern to young people.

Boarders say they feel safe and that bullying is not an issue. Staff do not tolerate bullying in the boarding house. There are effective safeguarding procedures which are implemented stringently by staff. Boarders understand that bullying in any form is not acceptable. They said that they would seek staff support immediately if they felt a fellow boarder was being bullied. Boarders are confident, polite and have a strong sense of identity. Their views are widely sought and they feel that their ideas have made a difference to life in the boarding house. Examples where boarders have influenced practice include menu planning, design and decoration of the boarding areas and activities.

Attendance was identified as an issue for improvement at the previous inspection. There has been a sustained increase in attendance so that it is currently around national averages for secondary schools and just above figures for students of the same age. Persistent absence has reduced significantly due to the concerted efforts of leaders and managers who employ an effective range of strategies. Although the attendance of some students with statements of special educational need remains a concern, the school is determined to make further improvements so that attendance is as strong as other aspects of behaviour and safety.

Leadership and management

The new headteacher has provided a strong vision for the school that has been adopted and is well understood across the school community. It is based on further raising achievement for all, developing a sense of community through partnership working, providing the widest possible range of opportunities for all and catering more effectively for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This builds on the considerable strengths already evident in the school. A small number of

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parents and carers felt that the school provided well for the academically able but perhaps not for other students. However, there is a renewed commitment to equality of opportunity and making it a priority that all students achieve their potential. The curriculum is already well matched to students' needs and interests, and it has been adjusted to cater better for those following a less academic path.

The supportive and skilled senior leadership team now has more clearly defined roles and middle leaders are held more accountable for teaching and progress in their areas. At the same time, staff welcome this change as they feel supported and valued for their contributions. Line management has been strengthened and data used more forensically to highlight areas of weaker performance. The development of teaching is at the core of extensive professional development. The governing body is well informed, supportive and its members bring a good range of skills to their role. They already provide challenge to leaders and managers, but will be better placed to do so when revised development planning has a sharper focus. Current interim planning lacks clear responsibilities, time lines, measurable targets and monitoring and review arrangements, but this is already being addressed. The governing body works with managers to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are highly effective and meet all statutory requirements. Partnership working, particularly with the feeder high schools, is well established and the school is outward looking. These changes show that the school has a strong capacity to improve even further in the future as it builds upon existing strengths.

The management of the boarding house is outstanding. It is effective and efficient as there are well-established routines and procedures which operate consistently, ensuring a high quality service. The management team has clear aims and objectives. Managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and have plans in place to further develop the service.

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Boarding provision

The ethos and underpinning philosophy of the boarding house is strong throughout. This ensures boarders live in a supportive and nurturing community within which they are valued and safe. Boarders enjoy boarding and develop excellent relationships with each other and with staff. They say that the best thing about boarding is making friends from around the world. They report that they feel supported by one another and are like a 'big family'. Boarders are confident, polite and have a strong sense of identity.

Staff provide a supportive and nurturing environment which, whilst promoting academic development, also supports the social and emotional well-being of the individual boarder. This applies particularly to new boarders. Boarders develop a high level of independence. For example, boarders in the sixth form do their own laundry, develop budgeting skills and can prepare snacks. Boarders in Year 13 said that they have all been offered places in top universities and felt confident about their ability to thrive in this environment.

Staff are professional, caring and passionate about their roles. They provide excellent healthcare for boarders ensuring that their physical, mental, emotional and sexual health is promoted well. Boarders said that they enjoy the food available. There is plenty of choice which includes healthy, multicultural and vegetarian options. Boarders reported that there is always ample food available and demonstrated a good understanding of healthy eating.

Staff facilitate and promote the involvement of boarders in an extensive range of purposeful, enjoyable activities and celebrate their achievements. For example, boarders join a variety of clubs in the school and the local community, take part in charitable fundraising activities and attain awards within the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

The boarding accommodation offers a homely and comfortable environment. Younger boarders appreciate the dormitory style of accommodation and say this facilitates the development of friendships. There is a superbly appointed new build used to accommodate sixth form boarders. Sixth form boarders appreciate their single or double en-suite study rooms and say this better reflects their maturity and need for quiet study.

Staff are appropriately trained and supported. The quality of the service is regularly monitored by the senior leadership team which further informs the development of provision. A parent said, 'It has been our first experience with boarding for our son and we are very happy with the professional approach, care and attention shown by the school. I would have no hesitation in recommending this school.'

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National minimum standards

- The school meets all the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

These are the grades for the boarding provision

Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience	1
Outcomes for boarders	1
Quality of boarding provision and care	1
Boarders' safety	1
Leadership and management of boarding	1

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons, and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



18 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Ashby School, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, LE65 1DT

I am writing to tell you what we found when we visited your school recently. I am sure that many of you will want to read the full report, but this is a summary of our inspection findings.

Ashby is a good school, with a good sixth form and an outstanding boarding facility in School House. We were particularly impressed by the positive relationships in the school and your excellent attitudes to your studies. You achieve well from your different starting points. This has been particularly true at Key Stage 4 for many years, but the progress of sixth form students has also improved considerably this year. We know that most of you successfully go on to higher or further education, training or employment. This is because most of the teaching that you receive is of a good quality. It is also because you are very well supported by teaching staff and other adults.

We know that the new headteacher has already successfully taken steps to improve some areas of the school. He, the governors and staff team are ambitious that your school becomes even better and have plans to make further improvements, to enable all students to achieve their full potential. We have asked them to:

- make all lessons as good as the best, particularly by giving you greater responsibility and independence in some lessons and by improving some teachers' use of assessment feedback within lessons
- prepare you more fully for life in multicultural Britain and increase planned opportunities for spiritual awareness and understanding.

Thank you for your own superb contribution to the inspection. Seeing you at work and talking to many of you about life in the school or in School House helped us a great deal. You can help the school move forward by sustaining your excellent attitudes and, for a few of you, by attending school more regularly. On behalf of the team, I would like to wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely
David Martin
Her Majesty's Inspector

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