

# Ashmeads School

Buccleuch Farm, Haigham Hill, Kettering, NN15 5PH

## Inspection dates

22–24 May 2013

### Overall effectiveness

**Good**

**2**

Pupils' achievement

Good

2

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

2

Quality of teaching

Good

2

Quality of curriculum

Good

2

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

2

Leadership and management

Good

2

## Summary of key findings

### This school is good because

- The staff have a very good understanding of the personalities and levels of learning of each student. As a result, well-prepared teaching is successful in enabling students to make good progress with their learning.
- Students respond positively to the encouragement and good humour of the staff which build their confidence and help them to enjoy learning.
- The students, who mostly enter the school with standards well below the national average, make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Students feel safe in school and make good progress with controlling their anger and improving their behaviour.
- The school's leaders and managers, supported effectively by the company's senior educational staff, have a good understanding of the strengths of the school, and the capacity to improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- There are occasions when teaching is not good enough to make sure that all students make rapid progress and achieve at the levels of which they are capable.
- Attendance is inconsistent and for a minority of students restricts the extent of their progress with their learning.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- Eight lessons were observed, taught by four teachers; six of these were observed jointly with the school Principal.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Principal, the company's education operations manager, members of staff and students.
- Four responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for students were received. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire for the results to be evaluated.
- A number of school policies and records were read, together with samples of students' work and information about their achievements and progress.

## Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- Ashmeads School, which opened in 2007, is situated near Kettering in Northamptonshire.
- The school's proprietor is Keys Child Care Ltd which owns a number of independent special schools and children's homes.
- The school provides full-time education for up to 12 boys and girls, aged 11 to 17 years, who experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The majority of the students are in public care and six have statements of special educational needs.
- There are 11 students on roll, funded by ten different local authorities.
- The school uses placements at local colleges for students preparing for transition to full-time, post-16 education or employment.
- The school summarises its aims as, 'providing a positive and nurturing environment to support the growth and achievement of every child'.
- The school was last inspected in February 2010.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by:
  - ensuring that students have frequent opportunities to reflect on the content of the lesson, organise their own ideas and contribute orally
  - ensuring that the tasks set in lessons are always matched to the individual levels of attainment of each student.
- Take steps to improve the attendance of students for whom levels of authorised or unauthorised absence are restricting the extent of their academic progress.
- Analyse the information gained from regular assessment of students' work to ensure that they are making progress which matches or exceeds the national average.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

**Good**

The quality of students' achievement is good; they make good progress in lessons and over time. The available data indicates that they make progress in line with national expectations in English, mathematics and science, and in a range of additional subjects. Some students make progress at a faster rate which exceeds national expectations, for example in reading, spelling and mathematics. Students with statements of special educational needs make progress at a rate similar to the majority of students in the school. Good progress is made with a range of AQA unit awards which enable students to achieve success between entry levels 1 and 3 according to their readiness. In the last two years a small number of students have achieved success with GCSE examinations, including an occasional Grade C. Individual students achieve good success in areas of personal interest such as music or sport. Given their relatively low starting points, and related emotional and behavioural difficulties on entry to the school, these results represent good achievement. The variety of experiences presented through the curriculum, together with good teaching, enable students to make the most of the opportunities provided by the school.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

**Good**

Students' behaviour and personal development are good. They enter the school with a range of behavioural difficulties which have restricted their academic and personal progress in a number of previous settings. The school sets high expectations for behaviour in classrooms and around the school. These expectations are implemented in a measured and sensitive manner. In the best classroom practice, students learn to take on responsibility, to manage aspects of their own learning and on some occasions to act as tutors to each other. Staff act as excellent role models, often working alongside students in the classroom. The emphasis on positive rewards is successful in maintaining students' perseverance and desire to succeed.

There are regular opportunities to celebrate success and to reflect on the results of any inappropriate behaviour. As a result, students make good progress in managing their anger and anxiety, and gradually develop the personal skills required to function successfully in adult life. The staff encourage them to apply their learning to real-life situations, such as working out how to manage their personal finances or practising their swimming to take part in a charitable sponsored swim. Attendance is variable and for a minority of students restricts the extent of their progress in lessons. In particular, authorised absence sometimes results in significant periods out of school.

There are good opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, often as a result of opportunities for group and individual discussions during a variety of lessons. The school places an appropriate emphasis on justice and fairness, both within the school and in activities which explore these themes on a national and international scale. The curriculum provides good opportunities for students to understand the needs of others and to take part in the local community, particularly through a strong emphasis on charitable activities. The school community of staff and students represents a variety of cultural heritages and students learn successfully to respect and value differences. A number of themes in the curriculum, including various certificated unit awards, help students to understand and access services in the local and wider community.

### Quality of teaching

**Good**

The quality of teaching is good. The majority of lessons across the full range of subjects are good and have a positive impact on students' learning and progress. Teachers are skilled at finding

learning activities which both challenge students to make strong efforts to succeed while also developing their self-esteem and confidence. There is a suitable emphasis on the use of visual resources, interesting activities and opportunities for hands-on learning. Students, for example, enjoy opportunities to prepare and present lunch for the school community each day, or activities in art which allow them to express their own personalities in the style of famous artists. They are engaged by these lessons and take an active part. They demonstrate the ability to sustain their concentration and, increasingly, to persevere when work is challenging.

In the best lessons, teachers maintain a good level of dialogue with students, encouraging them to reflect and share their ideas. They respond positively, for example, to the challenge of demonstrating their mathematical calculations on the whiteboard and discussing alternative ways of finding the correct answer. Teaching assistants and residential care staff from the students' homes work effectively alongside teachers and make regular contributions to students learning and their ability to manage their frustrations. Occasionally, students are not given enough time to organise their thoughts and present considered oral responses. In these situations, staff are inclined to jump in too soon and accept limited or incomplete answers from the students. The work is mostly set at a suitable level for each individual student, but on occasions there is insufficient challenge for those who understand and grasp new learning quickly. Similarly, individuals sometimes become frustrated when the lesson seems to be moving too fast for them.

A variety of assessment strategies are used and teachers have a sound understanding of the levels at which students are working in their various subjects. As a result, the work provided in lessons is mostly carefully matched to the students' individual learning needs. The data gained from assessment is not evaluated sufficiently well to ensure that all staff understand whether each student is making an appropriate rate of progress over time when compared with national expectations.

### **Quality of curriculum**

**Good**

The curriculum at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. There is a good emphasis on the development of literacy, numeracy and the acquisition of basic learning skills. This is balanced well by a range of subjects which challenge students to consider life and experiences beyond their immediate environment. All the National Curriculum subjects are built into the timetable for students whose statements of special educational needs require this. A number of subjects, including humanities, foreign languages, religious education and information and communication technology, are integrated successfully into projects which also provide extensive opportunities for practical learning. Students have a good range of opportunities for practical learning, for example through art, food studies and physical education. All students are helped to understand about healthy lifestyles as they prepare lunches for the school community and take part in a variety of regular physical activities. The use of colourful displays in classrooms and corridors create a stimulating environment for learning and students' successes are celebrated continuously. Access to external accreditation is a motivator and students' success with unit awards at various levels provides an appropriate benchmark for the progress they are making. Although GCSE entries are more restricted by the readiness of students and their often short-term placements at the school, this is a vital element in communicating the school's expectations to students. Older students are prepared well for life after school through appropriate careers advice, work experience and well-supported transition to further education.

### **Pupils' welfare, health and safety**

**Good**

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of the students are good. All the regulatory requirements are met through thorough policy development and consistent implementation. The school is diligent in ensuring that routine administration is attended to, including checking and

recording all aspects of the suitability of staff, and providing staff with up-to-date training in child protection, first aid and behaviour management. There are no recorded incidents of bullying and any unacceptable behaviour is acted upon promptly without over-reaction. The school is diligent in ensuring that the requirements of any statements of special educational needs, care plans and individual behaviour plans are regularly reviewed and understood by all staff working with the individual students. Clear records are maintained of accidents, incidents, physical restraints and any sanctions. Given the nature of the student body, safe behaviour is not universal but there are good levels of supervision throughout the school day; students are given continuous opportunities to reflect on their responses to situations and how these might be handled differently. Premises and fire safety are given appropriate significance, and routine checks and administration are timely and comprehensive.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Good**

The quality of leadership and management is good. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and all regulatory requirements are met. There is good oversight of teaching and learning and of students' behaviour, although persistence and well-focused support are required to ensure that lessons learned by students are implemented effectively. Central monitoring of activity by the company adds an additional assurance of the thoroughness of routine implementation.

The premises provide a suitable environment for learning and are maintained to a good standard. The outside spaces, including an allotment and orchard, are used effectively to contribute to students' learning experiences. Senior staff are diligent in ensuring that all the required information, including an appropriate complaints policy, is available to parents, carers and others. The school has a realistic assessment of its strengths and areas for development and wide-ranging plans for future development. However, the most important areas for improvement are not always identified because there is not a precise enough focus on specific aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. Staff at all levels of responsibility work together effectively as a strong team and their dedication is rewarded by the continuous development of a successful school.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133515
<b>Inspection number</b>	420189
<b>DfE registration number</b>	928/6069

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Day special school for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
<b>School status</b>	Independent School
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–17
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	11
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Keys Child Care Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Not applicable
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joyce Kuwaza
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 February 2010
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£10,400 to £33,540
<b>Telephone number</b>	01536 725998
<b>Fax number</b>	01536 420847
<b>Email address</b>	ashmeadsschool@keyschildcare.co.uk



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