

Ashdale

Sulby Avenue, Middlesbrough, Teeside, TS3 8RD

Inspection dates 18–19 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well because most make good progress and achieve important GCSE qualifications in a range of subjects including English and mathematics.
- Many more students now successfully re-engage with education and leave with at least five higher grade GCSE passes. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Teaching is good overall and occasionally outstanding. In lessons the work is carefully adapted to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of each individual.
- Rigorous and highly effective tracking of academic progress is monitored alongside care plans to ensure individual needs are fully met.
- Students show a pride in their school and behaviour is good. They develop excellent relationships with the staff and say they feel safe and enjoy attending Ashdale.
- The clear vision and leadership of the headteacher, to improve teaching and academic achievement, and the strong contribution of the deputy headteacher and management board ensures that there has been significant improvement since the last inspection.
- This commitment to achieve the best outcomes for every student is widely shared across the school and there is good capacity for further improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding and does not contribute to outstanding learning and achievement. Although students' levels of literacy and numeracy improve rapidly they are lower than would be expected for their age nationally, particularly in writing.
- Not all teachers are equally adept at developing writing skills and there are inconsistencies in the effective use of questioning to support learning.
- The low attendance of some students impacts on their their learning and development.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons taught by six teachers. One lesson, to prepare students for courses at Middlesbrough College, was observed off-site at the learning centre. Two lessons were joint observations, one with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons and individual support sessions.
- Pupils were observed reading in lessons.
- The inspector held discussions with students, senior and middle leaders, teachers, support staff, two representatives from the local authority and a representative from Middlesbrough College.
- Individual students talked to the inspector about their work during lessons as well as at break and lunchtime.
- The inspector looked at the work of the school, including students' behaviour, and analysed documentation in relation to attendance, safeguarding and the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness. Systems for checking students' progress and work in their books were also analysed.
- There were not enough responses from parents on the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) to trigger an analysis. Consequently, the views from the school's own parental surveys were taken into account and the inspector met with two parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Keith Massett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ashdale is a pupil referral unit for students in Key Stage 4. It provides individualised programmes of learning and support to young people who are at risk and have specific needs.
- Students are usually referred either because they are permanently excluded from mainstream school or because they are at risk of this happening. Some have health issues or anxieties resulting in difficulties attending their usual school and some are new arrivals in Middlesbrough and have not recently attended school. A small number are emergency placements by the local authority. A high proportion are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs relating to their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Ashdale, together with Oaktree and Parkwood schools, is part of the Complimentary Education Service, which is the alternative provision for Middlesbrough. The three schools are located on the same site within specialist premises and share a headteacher and management board.
- Ashdale students attend alternative courses delivered at Middlesbrough College.
- A well above average proportion of students are known to be eligible for the pupil-premium funding. The pupil-premium funding is additional funding for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children looked after by the local authority. There are currently a high proportion of free school meal children and three who are looked after by the local authority.
- Many pupils have experienced considerable periods of time out of school, or have had exceptionally low attendance at their school before joining Ashdale.
- Boys significantly outnumber girls.
- Most students are White British. A below average proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a similar proportion speak English as an additional language.
- There has been a significant change of staff since the last inspection and changes to the membership of the management board.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more students make outstanding progress by:
 - ensuring teachers provide more opportunities to support and develop writing skills and more opportunities for extended writing in lessons in other subjects in order to improve the quality of students' writing
 - ensuring questioning and discussions consistently check and challenge the knowledge, understanding, views and opinions of all students in order to extend their thinking and understanding of how to improve
- Improve attendance, particularly of the small group of students who are persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- There has been a sustained improvement in students' attainment and rates of progress since the last inspection.
- Attainment levels on entry to the school vary but are generally much lower than would be expected. Most students are at least two grades and many three grades below their predicted GCSE grades in English and mathematics when they arrive.
- Students make rapid and sustained progress so that, by the time they leave, although attainment in English and mathematics is still below national expectations the gap in attainment has closed significantly. However, the gap in English and particularly in writing remains a barrier for many.
- In 2012 almost all students attained at least five GCSE grades A* to G, almost half gained five GCSE higher grades A* to C and a very small number attained five high grade passes that included English and mathematics. The current leavers are on track to exceed these results, with significantly more students predicted to achieving passes that include English and mathematics.
- Many students have already achieved success in external examinations. All Year 11 students have achieved at least one Level 1 or Level 2 qualification, five have achieved C grade GCSE mathematics, one a C grade English GCSE and 28 have a GCSE in mathematics at grade A* to G.
- All groups, including girls, boys, minority ethnic students or those who speak English as an additional language and those with disability or special educational needs achieve equally well from their individual starting points.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority, who qualify for pupil-premium funding, achieve well and leave with similar levels of attainment and progress in English and mathematics as other students in the school.
- Highly personalised teaching and one-to-one support programmes ensure needs are very effectively met. A good example of this was seen during 'read, write, inc' where students make significant improvements in reading fluently and gain confidence to read aloud.
- All learners, including those who have long-term medical needs, make at least expected progress in learning, along with rapid and sustained progress in their social, emotional and personal development.
- Students enjoy attending vocational courses and achieve a range of level 1 accreditation in courses such as construction, welding and hair and beauty studies. These courses make a significant contribution in preparing students for when they leave school.
- Most students move successfully into education, employment or training at 16. However, poor attendance hampers the progress of some and limits their options when they leave.
- Parents state that their children make good progress. One parent described the school as 'fantastic' and another explained that changes seen in attitude, behaviour and academic progress were 'life changing'.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection, with some examples of outstanding practice. However, there is occasionally some that requires improvement. Leaders and managers know well the teaching strengths and areas for improvement and are working hard to improve remaining weaknesses.
- Teachers in all subjects plan learning activities with high quality resources that are well matched to individual student's needs and interests. Expectations are high and staff use good subject knowledge and assessment information to set realistic yet challenging work that is often adapted to address emerging needs as the lesson progresses.
- In a practical lesson observed during the inspection students were fully engaged and highly

motivated when making a pasta dish. The teacher used his extensive knowledge of the subject and of the students to provide high levels of challenge and just enough support when required to allow high levels of independent working. Students cooperated well to share resources and used a range of equipment so that all achieved high levels of success in the lesson.

- Students make good progress in literacy and numeracy and intervention is used effectively to support personalised learning programmes. The inspector observed good development of speaking, listening and reading skills but sometimes opportunities were missed to support and develop writing skills and for extended writing in lessons in other subjects.
- Strong partnerships between teachers and teaching assistants are evident and ensure learners access appropriate support that enables a good pace to learning. There are good relationships between the staff and students.
- Assessment of work is accurate. Regular oral and written feedback ensures learners are informed of what they need to do to improve. However, there is inconsistency in the use of questioning and discussions to check and challenge the knowledge, understanding, views and opinions of students.
- Most staff are highly skilled at engaging and motivating students and help them to overcome obstacles to learning. The climate for learning and attitudes of most students is good and students respond well to consistently applied behaviour-management strategies.
- Discussions with parents and analysis of the schools questionnaires indicate that parents believe that teaching is good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Ashdale provides students with a calm, safe and purposeful learning environment where positive attitudes and good behaviour are expected. Most quickly develop a pride in the school. Staff are adept at supporting students through difficult situations so that they engage in lessons and work well with each other and the staff for the major part of the time.
- The climate for learning is good. Students' attitudes to work and school life generally improve markedly. Parents and staff believe that behaviour is managed well.
- Behaviour since the last inspection has improved because the teaching is better at meeting the needs of the students and there are consistently applied systems of rewards and sanctions.
- Improved recording of 'low-level incidents' enables staff and the behaviour manager to act quickly to de-escalate situations before they become serious. The number of fixed-term exclusions is low and serious incidents have reduced significantly.
- Incidents of bullying or those defined as racist are not common and students say that they feel safe in school. They understand how to stay safe, including e-safety, and told the inspector that any bullying is dealt with very well and does not re-occur.
- Many students make exceptional progress in improving their attendance. Many re-engage with education and attend school and go to lessons regularly, often after prolonged periods of absence. There are appropriate strategies to encourage attendance, for example, by quickly following up non-attendance and keeping in contact with parents. However, overall attendance remains too low and some pupils remain persistent non-attenders.
- Rigorous safeguarding practices are in place for any off-site or practical learning activities. This provision is continuously monitored and reviewed to ensure quality, safety and good outcomes for learners.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has ensured her vision, passion and relentless focus on developing key areas that make a difference and improve student progress are embraced by everyone. Staff know what the school is trying to achieve and are committed to the cause. Improved outcomes in achievement and behaviour are the result of better practices in assessment, teaching, curriculum

planning, progress tracking and staff training.

- Rigorous systems are well established for checking the effectiveness of the school's work. Leaders know the strengths and priorities for development well and staff work effectively to implement clear improvement plans. There is now a good record of improvement and a good capacity to improve further.
- Performance-management procedures are fully in place and the link between the achievement of students and teachers' pay is explicit. Staff with new leadership roles are well supported in taking on additional responsibilities and are effectively held to account through the performance-management process.
- Staff are highly positive about their extensive development opportunities and in particular about the benefits of their involvement in the programme for specialist leaders in behaviour and attendance. The Complementary Education Service ensures staff also benefit from the sharing of best practice and making best use of resources to support high quality professional development across the service.
- The curriculum is underpinned by the principle that every student makes the maximum academic progress, thus ensuring it is suitably matched to their needs, abilities and interests. Newly established curriculum pathways support equality and better meet the range of students' needs. The breadth of the curriculum ensures there is a good provision for students' emotional development alongside good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The curriculum has been redesigned to take account of new referral routes at the end of Year 9 and Year 10 in the local area and students have started the transition programmes for these courses. The 'Preventing Exclusions' trial has established high quality vocational routes in partnership with Middlesbrough College.
- Strong partnerships exist with external agencies and parents, who are highly satisfied with the provision and feel that Ashdale fully meets the needs of their children and that the school helps them to support their child's learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management board effectively supports school leaders and provides appropriate challenge. The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. The chair of the management board has worked closely with the headteacher to ensure implementation of a range of successful strategies. The board is particularly engaged in the drive to improve teaching through rigorous performance management and to improve outcomes for all students and monitor the progress of groups of students. Recent changes to the membership of the board have enhanced its capacity to more effectively monitor the budget and to support further changes to the curriculum. Members manage the budget appropriately and fully understand the principles for using pupil-premium funding, which has only recently been identified in the budget by the local authority. Safeguarding and child protection is a high priority and all statutory requirements are fully met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	134346
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	400152

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Brunton
Headteacher	Linda Harries
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2011
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