

Ashton Community Science College

Aldwych Drive, Ashton, Preston, Lancashire, PR2 1SL

Inspection dates 2–3 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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. From below average starting points students make good progress so that by the end of Year 11, they reach standards which are average in English and above average in mathematics.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the college is good. Parents say, and students confirm that they enjoy coming to college. Students say they feel safe and cared for by their teachers.
- The college gives excellent support for disabled students, students with special educational needs and those entitled to the pupil premium. This support is helping them catch up with the standards reached by other students.
- Teaching is good and there is an ever increasing focus on teachers sharing the best practice that is seen in outstanding lessons.
- Senior leaders have high expectations. Improvement plans are well focused, as a result of accurate self-evaluation. Actions are raising the quality of teaching and increasing the rates of progress made by students.
- Leaders and managers provide a consistently challenging but caring approach to college performance and it is well-placed to improve.
- Governors in this college are knowledgeable and committed to the provision of a high quality education for the students. They challenge and support college leaders well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The sixth form requires improvement. Although many students make good progress, a significant proportion do not achieve as well as they could because their attendance is poor and they do not complete courses.
- More-able students do not always reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
- A small proportion of teaching requires improvement and not enough is outstanding.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills. Teachers' questions do not always enable students to deepen their understanding.
- Leaders collate a wealth of data relating to student performance and behaviour but it is not always presented in a form that is easy to interpret.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 35 lessons, and parts of lessons, were observed by inspectors. Three lessons were observed jointly with the principal, vice principal and assistant principal.
- Meetings were held with groups of staff, students, four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to 75 staff questionnaires. They considered information from previous college surveys carried out with parents and students and the responses of 11 parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors reviewed work in students' books and listened to students read during lessons. They observed students moving around inside and outside the college and at different times in the day.
- They observed the college's work and considered a number of documents, including the college's own evaluation of its performance, the college improvement plan, minutes from governors' meetings and records of behaviour.

Inspection team

Helen Gaunt, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

Andrew Henderson

Additional Inspector

Keith Massett

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Sheila Kaye

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ashton Community Science College is a smaller than average-sized secondary college.
- The proportion of girls is in line with the national average.
- The college has a higher than average proportion of students who are known to be eligible for funding from the pupil premium (which is provided to support the learning of students who are entitled to free school meals, in the care of the local authority or the children of forces families).
- Most students are White British and the majority of students speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is average and there is an above average proportion of students supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The college has a specially resourced provision for its own students with special educational needs, which is referred to as the Hearing Impairment Unit. During this inspection a small number of students were receiving additional support in this unit.
- In January 2010, Ashton incorporated the former City of Preston High School, situated at Ribbleton, and increased its student numbers substantially. Since then it has operated on a split site, approximately five miles apart. Student numbers on the Ribbleton site have gradually reduced as no further students were taken into Year 7 subsequent to the amalgamation. The college is now (since 1 September 2013) wholly based on the Ashton site.
- Since 2010, a specialist post 16 unit has been developed, on the Ashton site, which provides opportunities for a number of young people who would not normally have stayed on at school or college to continue their education and apply to university. This provision is under review.
- A new principal (who had previously been vice-principal at the college) took up her post on 1st September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that that the proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress from their relative starting points are higher than those found nationally by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently provide sufficient challenge for students of differing abilities, particularly the more-able
 - ensuring that teachers develop further their use of questioning and discussion to challenge all groups of students to develop their thinking and communication skills
 - providing opportunities for students to develop as independent learners.
- Raise achievement at post 16 by:
 - improving the attendance of sixth form students
 - ensuring that more students continue the courses they start in Year 12 into Year 13.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - producing simple analyses of student progress and behaviour data, so that all leaders, managers and governors are able to see at a glance where further intervention and support may be needed and/or measure the impact of actions taken on outcomes
 - ensuring that governors review more carefully the impact of pupil premium spending on the achievements of eligible students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the college in Year 7 with standards that are well below the national average. By the end of Year 11, as a result of good teaching, students have reached broadly average standards in many subjects, including English, mathematics and science, having made good progress from their individual starting points.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is low despite good progress because the gap between attainment on entry and the national average has not fully closed by the end of Year 9.
- There was a dip in the proportion of students who achieved five or more GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics in 2013. A number of different factors led to this dip. This group of students had relatively lower starting points than previous years and many complex personal needs, which slowed down their pace of learning.
- Leaders now keep a closer eye on the progress of individuals and offer more support when a student is seen to be in danger of underperforming. This has successfully accelerated progress for all but some of the more-able. Data provided by the college indicate that, for current Year 11 students, standards are expected to be in line with those achieved nationally. This was confirmed by lesson observations and scrutiny of work.
- Students' achievement is particularly strong in mathematics, science, geography and art.
- Students make good progress in mathematics because a range of additional interventions, including one-to-one support from a qualified teacher, which ensures that students' misconceptions are quickly addressed.
- In English, some students' progress has been slower than it has in mathematics because many arrive at the college with relatively weak literacy skills. Effective literacy support means that most of these students are now making equally strong progress in both subjects.
- The vast majority of students are not entered early for English and mathematics GCSEs because the college decided that it was not in their best interests.
- Students are articulate, and literacy is a continuing focus across the college. From their entry into Year 7, teachers ensure that students read in all subjects and there is a particular focus on key words and technical subject specific language. Catch-up funding provides additional literacy support for students who enter the college with low reading ages, but the impact of this has yet to be fully evaluated.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are well provided for in lessons. Until recently, the progress made by some students supported at school action plus has been slower than others. By continuing to focus on the specific needs of these individuals, the college has ensured that more of them are now making progress in line with others. Students who receive additional support in the Hearing Impairment Unit make progress in line with other students.
- Pupil premium funding is used in a variety of ways (including learning coaches, after-school activities and personalised courses) to help those known to be eligible for this funding to catch up with in their learning.
- At the end of Year 11, the gap between the attainment in English and in mathematics of students eligible for free school meals and others is less than one grade and is closing steadily over time. They make good progress due to the focused and intensive support they receive.
- Students are guided on to appropriate courses. Those who study vocational courses within college and under partnership arrangements make good progress in their learning. In 2012, no students were not in education, employment or training when they left Year 11.
- The quality of teaching and students' good behaviour both contribute to high academic standards and well developed social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness. Students go confidently into the next stage of employment or education.
- Overall attainment at the end of the sixth form is low because many enter with low GCSE grades. The achievement of students who complete courses is often good but too many start courses and do not complete them and some students' low attendance prevents them from

making good progress in their learning.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching is good or outstanding and there is none that is inadequate. However, teaching is not outstanding because some requires improvement and not enough is outstanding.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge and enthusiasm help to create lessons which students enjoy, and their calm approach to behaviour management means that students remain on task.
- Teaching is typically characterised by excellent classroom relationships, the provision of a variety of well constructed activities and opportunities for students to work collaboratively.
- In the best lessons tasks are matched accurately to individual student needs and provide opportunities for students to develop their skills independently of the teacher. This was exemplified in an outstanding art lesson where learning outcomes were clearly matched to GCSE grade criteria and students were challenging themselves to achieve the highest grades.
- In less effective lessons teachers provide too much explanation themselves rather than allowing students to be independent or think for themselves and students are over dependent on the teacher to tell them what they need to do to move on to the next stage.
- Some teachers do not always challenge all students to work hard and ensure that their progress is rapid enough because work is not always matched to their individual levels of ability. This means that students, especially the more-able, do not always attain as highly as they could.
- Most teachers mark students' work regularly and accurately and, increasingly, they encourage students to take responsibility by involving them in self-assessment of their own work.
- Relationships are strong and based on respect. All staff model the college's values and expectations and set an excellent example to students.
- Teachers and teaching assistants carefully plan in-class support and catch-up sessions for disabled students and those who have special educational needs so they develop writing, reading and mathematical skills appropriate for their age.
- There is a strong focus on literacy development in all subjects and students are developing good written and aural communication skills as a result.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around the college is very good, including at lunchtime and break. Students consistently show respect towards one another. There is a very purposeful and calm atmosphere.
- Students value the support and encouragement given to them by their teachers.
- Year 7 students settle in quickly because the college supports them in making new friends. They are paired up with older students who help them find their way around the college.
- There are ample opportunities for students to assume leadership roles.
- Students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, disabled students and those who have special educational needs are extremely well supported.
- Bullying is rare and the college deals with any incidences of bullying effectively. Students understand all of the different forms of bullying and know how to protect themselves, including when they using the Internet.
- Parents believe that the college manages behaviour well and that their children are safe; students confirm this view. Students attending vocational courses off site behave responsibly.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions has been reducing over the last three years as a result of improved behaviour management strategies.
- Attendance is average. It has improved steadily over the past three years and compares very

favourably with similar schools or colleges. There is little persistent absence, which is mainly attributable to a small number of students.

- Leaders actively seek feedback from students about their views of the college's provision. Students told inspectors there is very little they would do to improve it as they like it as it is

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders' monitoring and evaluation of performance is accurate. They know how to improve teaching and learning and have comprehensive plans to raise the quality of teaching and achievement further. Leadership and management are not yet outstanding, because teaching is not yet helping all students to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Since the previous inspection, information about students' progress has been used effectively to improve standards of behaviour, the quality of teaching and to raise achievement. A wealth of student progress and behaviour data is collated by leaders and used by them to highlight areas of specific need. However, it is not always analysed and produced in a form that is easy to interpret so that all adults can use it as effectively as possible to raise achievement.
- Leadership of additional support, for example for students with special educational needs (including the Hearing Impairment Unit) is improving. Ensuring that these students make progress in line with other students remains a priority for the school.
- This is a very caring community in which staff and governors do everything they can to ensure both the personal and academic development of the students. Staff questionnaires returned during the inspection, showed that morale is high and the way ahead is supported by all.
- Students in Years 7 to 11 are formally assessed half termly. Potential underachievement is picked up by subject leaders and pastoral staff and targeted support and intervention is helping to raise achievement in all subjects.
- The performance of teachers is linked to pay rises when these are justified. Teachers report that these systems contribute to improving their professional development by clearly linking targets to the national Teachers' Standards. Teachers told inspectors that they receive good support in helping them to improve their performance in the classroom.
- The curriculum is constantly being evaluated and refined to ensure a suitable range of courses, meeting the needs of all students, so they make increasingly strong progress. Students have good opportunities to engage in a range of activities outside the normal college day and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted in all areas of the curriculum.
- The school has used the pupil premium to improve achievement in English and mathematics by providing small group and one-to-one sessions with specialist teachers and extra revision.
- Students are well supported at each stage of transition and are very happy with the level of advice and guidance they receive when choosing courses. The college is inclusive and leaders promote equal opportunities well.
- The college has worked well in partnership with other local providers to secure appropriate provision for students and high quality professional development opportunities for staff.
- Although minimal support has been provided by the local authority to the college, a decision taken by college leaders, relationships between the two are positive.
- **The governance of the college:**
 - The governing body has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college, including the quality of teaching. Governors support and challenge the principal and other leaders to improve the college further and scrutinise information about students' achievement carefully, comparing it with national figures. The governing body ensures that performance management is used fairly and that teachers are rewarded only for meeting classroom targets. Governors plan carefully to ensure financial sustainability. Governors do not fully evaluate the impact of the pupil premium funding on outcomes for eligible pupils and cannot, therefore, be fully confident that it is having the desired effect.

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	119707
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	426326

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	787
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Gutteridge
Headteacher	Sharon Asquith
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2010
Telephone number	01772 513002
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