

Ashwell Academy

Snowdon Way, Bransholme, Hull, HU7 5DS

Inspection dates

8–9 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected as an academy

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured teaching is effective enough to secure good progress. Neither have they ensured good enough support to help pupils control their behaviour.
- Leaders do not compare the pupils' progress to that of pupils of the same age, with similar starting points. As a result, leaders do not know if the pupils are catching up quickly enough.
- Leaders do not analyse information about aspects of the school's work well enough to know what is working well and to identify what needs further improvement.
- Inconsistencies in adults' management of pupils' behaviour sometimes leads to pupils displaying challenging behaviour because expectations are not firmly established or understood.
- Governors do not fulfil all of their responsibilities as trustees of an academy. Neither do they routinely check the accuracy of information leaders give them.
- Some teachers do not plan lessons that ensure pupils' learning moves on quickly. This is because activities are not based on what pupils already know and understand.
- Some teaching assistants do not always provide effective support for pupils' learning or behaviour needs.
- Teaching provides too few opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, speaking and writing skills.
- Some pupils do not attend often enough to get the full benefit of the opportunities on offer.

The school has the following strengths

- Some teachers' strong subject knowledge and sensitive understanding of how to support pupils' emotional well-being mean that some pupils make faster progress and catch up the time they have lost in their previous schools.
- Leaders make sure the personal timetables of the most-able pupils are effective. These pupils reach high standards in subjects in which they are talented.
- Leaders provide a wide range of subjects and activities that promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most pupils develop respect for people who are different from themselves.
- The vocational subjects taught at the North Carr provision motivate and engage pupils. Vulnerable pupils from other schools also benefit from this provision.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors by ensuring:
 - systems are established for collecting accurate information about all aspects of the school's work. The information must be analysed so it is clear what is working well and which aspects of the school's work need further improvement
 - leaders report information and their analyses clearly to the governing body; governors challenge the accuracy of the information and appropriateness of the analysis, and agree plans for the next stages of the school's improvement
 - leaders develop robust methods for understanding the impact their decisions have on pupils' progress and emotional well-being, including how they manage all aspects of the facilities and activities provided
 - leaders ensure teachers compare what pupils know and understand in English, mathematics and science with outcomes achieved by other pupils of the same age and similar starting points
 - leaders provide effective training and support so that all staff have the skills to consistently implement agreed plans to support pupils' emotional and behavioural needs
 - the governing body keeps up to date with all their duties and responsibilities, particularly about the information they need to publish and keep updated.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make rapid progress in English, mathematics and science by ensuring:
 - checks on what pupils know and understand are accurate and detailed so that teachers and pupils know exactly what they need to do to move on to the next level of learning
 - teachers plan activities that help pupils move on to the next level and help them catch up with pupils nationally
 - teaching assistants understand their role in supporting individual pupils or groups of pupils
 - teachers and instructors plan opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, writing and speaking skills in lessons and activities
 - teachers, instructors and teaching assistants have opportunities to learn from the most effective practice in the school and outstanding practice in other settings.

- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by ensuring:
 - pupils get the right support to improve their attendance and quickly move to full-time timetables
 - teachers are trained to provide better support to pupils in managing their behaviour and emotional responses.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not established an accurate approach to checking all aspects of the school's work. As a result, they do not plan precisely enough to bring about rapid improvements.
- The Principal and governing body have made difficult but necessary decisions to ensure the school is staffed to meet the needs of the pupils within financial constraints. Since September 2015, leaders have developed new approaches to teaching, but this work has not ensured that pupils make the progress they are capable of or develop better ways to manage their feelings and behaviour.
- Leaders do not use the information available about the pupils' complex needs to make the best possible provision. For example, the system established to control pupils' access to parts of the building frustrates pupils and, at times, escalates their challenging behaviour. Other aspects of managing risk also require improvement so that pupils can safely undertake a wider range of activities.
- Leaders are developing the way they check the effectiveness of teachers, instructors and other staff. Leaders recognise their work in this area is not effective because teaching needs to improve. However, they respond quickly to guidance from external advisers, for example about how to improve teachers' feedback to pupils, and, as a result of their actions, some pupils are making faster progress.
- Overall, staff are positive about the support they receive. All teachers were new to the school in September 2015 and all teaching assistants and instructors moved into new roles or were new to the school. This means the full impact of how leaders support staff development and performance has not been fully tested.
- The very small number of parents who responded to Parent View are positive about the difference the school makes to their children. Leaders regularly collect the views of parents during events and home visits and these are also positive.
- The range of subjects pupils study is well organised so that, even when pupils are at the centre for six-week placements, they benefit from working on basic literacy and numeracy skills delivered in a thought-provoking way. For example, when covering a theme about Sierra Leone, pupils explored issues of child soldiers and 'conflict' diamonds, and learned to appreciate the creativity of children living in difficult circumstances.
- Advice, guidance and enrichment programmes provide an effective way of ensuring support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A range of external agencies are involved, including the armed services and police. Their involvement helps promote British values. The effectiveness of this work varies in line with the time pupils remain at the school. Pupils who have been at the school for longer than a year talk positively about how they have learned to respect others and understand the consequences of poor choices.
- Leaders appreciate the valuable advice provided by the local authority. A local authority officer conducts regular monitoring visits to check and advise on the effectiveness of the places the school offers for pupils excluded from mainstream schools.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have not kept up with the statutory duty they have to publish information and review key policies within appropriate timescales.
 - Governors question leaders over the information shared with them but do not always check the accuracy of, for example, attendance information, so they do not have a secure starting point to plan further improvements.
 - Governors have made sure appropriate systems are in place to manage the performance of staff and reward those who have met the necessary standards and targets.
 - Governors make sure funding is used appropriately, including additional funds for pupils who are looked after by the local authority and those in receipt of free school meals or education, health and care plans.
 - Governors' foresight in the development of the North Carr provision, used by vulnerable pupils from other schools and settings as well as Ashwell pupils, ensures the school meets a key requirement of the funding agreement with the Department for Education (DfE).
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders make sure staff are trained and understand their duty to keep pupils safe and report any concerns. Staff work effectively with a range of other agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families. Minor omissions in the record of checks on the suitability of staff employed to work in the school were corrected during the inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- There is too much variation in the effectiveness of teaching for pupils to make good progress. Some teachers do not use the information they have about what pupils already know and understand to plan lessons that will move pupils on quickly. Some teachers and other staff are not skilled enough to support pupils' emotional well-being and behaviour. As a result, some lessons are interrupted by pupils' unacceptable behaviour.
- Pupils are tested when they arrive at the school to provide teachers with accurate information about their reading, writing and mathematical skills. However, some teachers' assessments of the progress pupils make in lessons, and over time, are not accurate enough for them to use to plan pupils' next steps.
- Some teachers and instructors do not use every opportunity for pupils to develop their reading, writing or speaking skills. The lack of opportunity to practise these skills slows pupils' progress in these important areas.
- Teaching assistants' contribution to the progress pupils make is variable. Some do not follow teachers' careful planning in order to help pupils to make better progress, and some do not direct pupils' behaviour appropriately.
- Some teaching is highly effective because teachers skilfully combine good subject knowledge and focused questioning with sensitive support for pupils' emotional well-being. This results in pupils remaining calm and receptive to learning, so they make rapid progress.
- Some teachers plan lessons designed to capture pupils' interests based on real-life situations. These lessons, and the practical subjects taught in the North Carr Trade, Art and Cuisine section, are effective. Pupils respond positively, are keen to learn and make good progress.
- Teaching at sites used by pupils other than the school is effective. Leaders monitor these sites through the use of an external adviser. Teaching seen by the inspector at one of the sites was effective and the pupil could clearly explain how a car braking system worked using the diagram he had drawn.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Systems to collect, understand and use information about pupils' behaviour and attendance are not effective. This means leaders do not plan improvements effectively.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive tailored support to promote their development of practical life skills. Many make noticeable progress towards the objectives in their education, health and care plans.
- Pupils who talked with the inspector were clear that they preferred the school to any other school they had attended. They said they feel safer and are learning more because the staff understand and help them.
- Pupils recognise that some of them use inappropriate language, including racist and homophobic expressions. However, they were clear that they said inappropriate things in the heat of the moment, rather than due to a lack of respect. During lessons and in conversation, pupils demonstrated they have a good level of understanding and respect for people who are different from themselves.
- Pupils learn to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. Some pupils recognise they sometimes forget how to manage their feelings and behaviour. Pupils are confident that bullying is dealt with appropriately by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils' attitudes to learning vary because leaders have not made sure there is a consistent response to pupils' behaviour. When teaching is less effective, silly behaviour interrupts learning. Pupils are admitted to the school because of poor behaviour in their previous schools, but the staff's inconsistent expectations mean silly behaviour is not corrected. Leaders do not have a consistent approach to managing aspects of pupils' behaviour. This means staff are not consistent in their responses to the different challenges pupils present.
- Leaders have only recently introduced a training programme to ensure staff know how to physically intervene, when needed to keep pupils safe. This means not enough staff are confident to support pupils when other approaches are not working.

- Attendance is low, but for most pupils it improves when compared to their attendance at their previous schools. The attendance of some pupils supported with home tuition is not accurately recorded. While this affects only a small number of pupils, it means leaders are not able to evaluate the effectiveness of this aspect of their work.
- Pupils who have placements at other sites attend in line with their attendance at the school. Staff report that pupils' behaviour at other sites is more controlled, as they are motivated by activities that spark their interest.
- Some staff are highly skilled at understanding and supporting pupils who face great difficulties with their behaviour. This skilled support means that pupils quickly return to lessons and continue learning following periods of anger or distress.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Leaders' views of the current progress of pupils are over-optimistic because teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are not always accurate. Overall outcomes require improvement because the quality of teaching across subjects and year groups is not consistently good.
- Since September 2015, leaders have developed ways of assessing pupils' attitudes to learning and progress over six-week blocks and over longer periods of time in English, mathematics and science. Teachers' variable use of the new system does not give leaders the high-quality information they need to understand the effectiveness of the school.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs is in line with that of other pupils in the school. Work with other agencies helps leaders to identify why some pupils are not making progress, and ensures leaders have a good understanding of individual pupils' special educational needs.
- Leaders develop individual programmes of activities for pupils who have experienced extreme challenges and difficulties in other settings. Emerging relationships with other schools are beginning to ensure pupils who have particular strengths in particular subjects, for example music and science, make good progress in these areas. As a result, a few of the most-able pupils are on track to achieve well in GCSE or other qualifications.
- The outcomes for most pupils who attend other providers are positive. Some pupils achieve Level 1 vocational and sports-related qualifications in Year 10.
- A proportion of pupils who have short-term placements at the school successfully return to mainstream schools. This is because they have made clear steps forward in their English and mathematics and in their ability to manage their own behaviour. The proportion varies over time, reflecting the different challenges pupils present when they arrive at the school.
- As a result of the strong advice and guidance programme and use of careers advisers, the small number of Year 11 pupils have college places to move on to in September 2016. The school is providing individual transition plans to support pupils' moves to their new settings.

School details

Unique reference number	139483
Local authority	Kingston upon Hull City Council
Inspection number	10011032

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eunice Evans
Principal	Michael Birkenshaw
Telephone number	01482 331720
Website	www.ashwellacademy.com
Email address	admin@ashwellacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Information about this school

- Ashwell Pupil Referral Unit was inspected in 2012 and judged good. The pupil referral unit converted to a 'stand-alone' academy in April 2013. An interim Principal was appointed in September 2013 and was subsequently appointed as the permanent Principal in June 2014. Since that time there have been significant changes in staffing at the school.
- The school makes provision for pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream and special schools, and for those pupils who are at risk of exclusion. Pupils are placed at the school for varying amounts of time, initially for six-week placements. The aim, for the majority of the pupils, is a successful return to a mainstream school.
- During their time at the school, some pupils are assessed for an education, health and care plan and either remain at the school or move to other specialist provision. The majority of pupils are in Key Stage 3. A small number of pupils remain at the school for Key Stage 4. There were no Year 11 pupils in 2015.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British. The portion of pupils who are disadvantaged and for whom the school receives pupil premium (the additional resource for pupils who receive free school meals or who are looked after) is above average. The proportion of pupils who are looked after by the local authority is significantly higher than found in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is higher than average and the proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans is rising.
- The school has developed the North Carr provision by adding North Carr Trade and North Carr Art to the existing North Carr Cuisine. This provision is used by a number of primary and secondary schools, and a special school, to support vulnerable pupils.
- The school uses the following other settings to provide individual programmes for just under a quarter of the current pupils: Wenlock Barracks, Local Works, Hull Raceway, St Patrick's for Alter Education. The school also works in partnership with mainstream secondary schools to provide specialist subject teaching for a small number of pupils.
- The school provides home tuition for a varying number of pupils on roll.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was initially conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 as a short inspection of a good school. The inspection converted to a section 5 inspection under the same act.
- The inspector visited the four teaching groups several times, on two occasions with senior leaders. Visits to lessons at the North Carr provision were undertaken to meet pupils working there. The inspector visited one of the other sites used by the school's pupils.
- A meeting was held with a small group of pupils, as well as informal conversation with many pupils at breaktime and during lessons. Pupils' books were reviewed during visits to classrooms.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders and teaching assistants to discuss all aspects of the school's work. School documents and records were discussed and reviewed.
- A meeting was held with the Chair of the Governing Body, who is also a trustee, and other governors. The inspector also met with a representative of the local authority, as the authority responsible for the majority of pupils attending the school.
- No staff or pupils responded to Ofsted's online surveys. The inspector considered three free text responses to Parent View and leaders' own survey of parents' views about the academy.

Inspection team

Susan Hayter, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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