

Ashlea House School

474 Stockport Road, Denton, Manchester M34 6ET

Inspection dates

13–15 September 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- This is a continually improving school, where the proprietor and senior leaders are determined to ensure that pupils achieve to the very best of their ability and benefit from high-quality teaching.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is exceptionally well organised. She ensures that rigorous quality assurance systems are in place to monitor teaching and that school improvement plans are fully implemented.
- From very low starting points, pupils make outstanding progress in various subjects, including mathematics and English, often having previously missed out on long periods of education.
- Pupils benefit from a stimulating curriculum, which includes exciting educational visits to various places of interest. This fires pupils' imagination and engages them in their learning.
- Senior leaders ensure that all regulatory requirements are met. In relation to safeguarding, staff leave absolutely nothing to chance and comprehensively assess all risks. As a result, pupils are safe and secure.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers and learning support staff develop strong bonds with pupils. They secure pupils' trust and develop a deep understanding of their learning styles and interests.
- Work to ensure that pupils are ready for the next stage of their learning is exemplary. Pupils are equipped with the necessary skills and positive attitudes to support them in the world of work and further education.
- Pupils say that they feel part of 'one big family'. They are polite, welcoming, well mannered and proud of their achievements.
- All aspects of pupils' health, welfare and safety are given the highest priority. Those who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are well supported and fully understand the consequences of their actions.
- Staff comprehensively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through visits to places of worship, music, art and languages lessons. Pupils understand their rights and responsibilities and appreciate the culturally diverse nature of British society.
- Local authorities speak highly of their relationship with the school. They say that communication with leaders is exemplary and that pupils' educational and social needs are well catered for.
- The proprietor has a full understanding of the school's strengths. He provides robust governance and oversees the headteacher's performance management.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that senior leaders and the proprietor improve leadership further by:
 - formalising arrangements with external specialists involved in monitoring and assessing the quality of provision
 - recording discussions and actions agreed at strategic meetings between the proprietor and senior leaders to check that actions have been accomplished.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Since the school opened in 2009, it has gone from strength to strength. The proprietor, senior leaders and staff are highly ambitious and determined to make sure that every pupil achieves their potential by, 'guiding and nurturing individual talents and ensuring access to a broad and balanced individualised curriculum within a caring and friendly environment'.
- The headteacher's outstanding leadership and drive, coupled with the support she receives from the executive headteacher and proprietor, have ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- Staff are proud to work at the school and are highly positive about its leadership and management. They are trained well and are fully appreciative of their many professional development opportunities. Teachers and support workers know exactly what the school aims to achieve and make it a priority to ensure that pupils enjoy learning, achieve well and are fully prepared for life after school.
- Most staff are part-time. However, the school has an excellent record of investing in staff, identifying talent and supporting those wishing to develop their careers. The headteacher encourages support staff to pursue their ambitions of gaining qualified teacher status. She also ensures that staff are familiar with new qualification requirements, including those for GCSE English and mathematics.
- Pupils benefit from an outstanding curriculum which develops their reading, writing and mathematical skills well. They are mainly taught on a one-to-one basis and are encouraged to pursue their interests. Pupils participate in a wide range of subjects, including science, humanities, French, Spanish, art and music. Where the school is not fully equipped to teach a subject, such as physical education, it calls on its excellent partnerships, including those with a local sports centre and boxing club.
- Senior leaders' broaden pupils' experiences and opportunities exceptionally well, notably through a highly effective programme which develops their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Pupils learn about different faiths, such as Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism, and visit various places of worship, including a local mosque. Pupils enjoy visits to the theatre and cinema, Manchester's People's Museum and Liverpool's International Slavery Museum.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of British values. Pupils learn about the principles of democracy and crime and punishment and enjoy volunteering in the local animal rescue shelter. They raise funds for various charities and are highly conscientious when helping staff, and when carrying out their duties around the school. Such activities and responsibilities help pupils to develop into caring, active citizens and exceptionally good ambassadors for the school.

The governance of the school

- The proprietor fully understands how the school operates, what it does well and where further improvements are possible. He is directly involved in the life of the school and thoroughly committed to ensuring that pupils develop into confident young adults. In addition to this, the proprietor participates in the performance management of the headteacher and in reviews of the performance of other staff. However, written records are not always kept of strategic meetings between senior leaders and the proprietor. The proprietor and senior leaders are aware of this potential weakness and are in the process of making arrangements to address it. To ensure that teaching and learning are

of the highest quality, arrangements for the regular external review of provision are planned.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has a safeguarding policy published on its website. The school leaves nothing to chance when it comes to ensuring that pupils, staff and visitors are safe. All necessary checks are carried out on members of staff when they join the school. These are regularly updated. Detailed risk assessments are carried out in relation to all aspects of school life. These safeguard pupils when they are in school, volunteering or working off site. Staff are highly trained to fully implement safeguarding procedures and are vigilant and skilled at identifying signs of abuse and acting on any concerns in relation to pupils' health and well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Highly effective teaching and assessment, including well-planned learning activities that cater for pupils' individual learning needs, ensure that pupils enjoy school and make outstanding progress.
- Pupils learn in one main classroom, with a smaller room for intensive one-to-one learning sessions. Both rooms are bright and well resourced, with a wide variety of books on offer. Pupils' work is celebrated in attractive displays that explore topics ranging from the war poets and women's suffrage to the history of popular music and the harmful effects of illegal drugs and alcohol.
- Teachers and support workers work hand in hand, ensuring that pupils benefit from intensive support and close attention to their learning needs. Almost all pupils have significant gaps in their learning, having missed out on long periods of education. However, highly effective assessment procedures administered when pupils enter the school, coupled with good monitoring, enable staff to accurately gauge how well pupils are performing over time.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Their constant praise and support helps to develop pupils' confidence and engagement in class. In all sessions observed during the inspection, pupils were encouraged to share their ideas, listen to each other's views, think carefully and consider each other's feelings.
- All teachers, whether focusing on music, science or citizenship, are expert at developing pupils' literacy, language and communication skills. Typically in sessions focusing on citizenship and human rights, pupils are encouraged to read, research various topics and hone their debating skills. Mathematics is taught highly effectively. Teachers and support workers are skilled at devising activities that require pupils to apply their mathematical skills to problem-solving activities. This is shown in mathematics work exploring the use of statistics, surveys and questionnaires in sampling public opinion.
- The school's work to ensure that the most-able pupils make outstanding progress and attain well is highly effective. Pupils are supported in making the right choices about their learning. This applies as much to academic courses as it does to vocational qualifications. For example, pupils have been successful in progressing to level 3 vocational courses in areas such as catering, hospitality and uniformed service. Specialist teaching has helped pupils to follow their interests and attain good GCSE grades in subjects such as art and music.
- Pupils regularly complete homework. This is evident from the breadth of work in their personal files. Teachers are especially vigilant when it comes to marking, assessing pupils' work and setting targets. This they do in line with the school's policies.

- A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teachers record even the tiniest of steps pupils take in their learning. For some, these are significant strides. Teachers provide good advice to pupils on their work. Pupils respond to this and improve their learning as a result.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally polite, courteous and respectful. They are especially welcoming to visitors and see it as their duty to ensure that others are looked after and properly catered for. This was the case throughout the course of the inspection, where pupils extended their hospitality in a very natural and honest way.
- Pupils' know what it takes to become a successful learner. Pupils initially reluctant to participate in class are soon keen to share their ideas, answer questions and participate in activities.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of what will be required of them in the world of work and further education after school. This is because staff prepare them well for these stages. Most pupils have carried out voluntary work and had work experience. Some have secured part-time work, accrued savings and managed their own budgets. For example, pupils are given a weekly food budget. With this they can plan their favourite meals for the week, purchase ingredients and cook for themselves, peers and staff.
- The school offers pupils outstanding careers advice. This is shown in their 'working to work' books. These equip pupils with the knowledge and information they will need in the outside world, record their achievements and allow them to make informed choices. In addition to this, the school ensures that pupils can access impartial careers advice from colleges and local government services.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils know that they should follow the rules and why. When speaking to the inspector, all pupils said that 'everyone gets on together'. Typically they commented that, 'We are taught life skills and to know right from wrong.' When asked what they would change about the school, all had trouble coming up with anything, within the bounds of reason, which could improve their experience.
- Pupils are of the view that behaviour is good, as are all teachers who completed the inspection questionnaire. The school's behaviour log contains very few incidents and demonstrates that behaviour continually improves over time.
- Social workers from local authorities, work-based learning providers, tour guides from various museums and tutors and lectures from local colleges, are highly complimentary about pupils from the school, several of whom have become 'top students'.
- Pupils learn in a very calm and purposeful learning environment that is rarely disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. Teachers and support workers are expert at identifying 'trigger points', which could lead to poor behaviour, and they successfully intervene when necessary to ensure that pupils follow the rules and respect each other and staff.
- Pupils' attendance is outstanding, both at school and college, and so is their punctuality. They respond very well to teachers' guidance and value the school's reward system.
- Pupils know what racism and homophobic bullying are. They say that neither happens at school because there is respect and everyone gets on well together.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- From often very low starting points on entry to the school, pupils make outstanding progress. Pupils make rapid and sustained progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and a range of other subjects. This is because teachers have exceptionally high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. In addition to this, each pupil has a 'personalised' curriculum, which is delivered by highly skilled and dedicated teachers and support workers.
- Because of the very small number of pupils at the school, it is not possible to make any meaningful comparisons between their progress and attainment and that of other groups of pupils nationally. However, school procedures for assessing pupils' skills and abilities on entry to the school are highly efficient, and much improved since the previous inspection. These procedures, and records charting pupils' progress throughout the school, show that most pupils make very rapid progress. The vast majority attain exceptionally well in their different courses of study.
- For those pupils studying at GCSE level, opportunities are available to study a range of subjects including English, mathematics, science geography and art. The school's records of previous pupils' academic performance show that several have secured up to five GCSEs at grades A to C. Other pupils have not attained as highly as this but have nonetheless made exceptional progress.
- In subjects where pupils' progress is not quite as strong as others, for example in science, professional development and training is available to teachers, equipping them with the necessary skills to boost pupils' performance.
- A wide range of additional qualifications is available to pupils in subjects such as psychology, vehicle maintenance, music, citizenship and personal finance. Pupils make exceptional progress in these areas. Entry-level qualifications in English and mathematics ensure that appropriate qualifications are available for pupils still in the process of acquiring basic skills. The school's own assessment information and inspection evidence indicate that these pupils make excellent progress.
- Highly effective partnerships with local colleges help to broaden pupils' opportunities even further, in areas such as uniformed services and catering. Pupils thrive in these colleges and are fully engaged in their learning. This is because courses are set at the right academic level. As a result, pupils make exceptional progress and attain outstandingly well.
- Current and past pupils have attained highly in various vocational programmes of study, charting a clear path to careers in the armed forces, catering and hospitality, animal care and health and social care. Such personalised programmes have enabled staff to motivate and drive the most able pupils and nurture the talents that staff believe each pupil has.

School details

Unique reference number	135975
DfE registration number	357/6003
Inspection number	10020741

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Special school for boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Proprietor	Andrew Parish
Headteacher	Sarah-Marie Parish
Annual fees (day pupils)	£20, 800
Telephone number	0161 336 0664
Website	www.fullcirclecare.co.uk
Email address	sarahmarie@fullcirclecare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 September 2013

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection a new headteacher and several staff, including three teachers and one support worker, have been appointed.
- Ashlea House opened in 2009 and is owned by Full Circle Care Limited. It is a small special school that is registered to admit up to five boys between the ages of 11 and 18. The particular special educational needs catered for are behavioural, social and emotional difficulties.
- A small number of pupils have education, health and care plans. The school was last inspected in September 2013.
- The school's primary aim is to 'encourage every student to achieve their potential by guiding and nurturing individual talents and ensuring access to a broad and balanced individualised curriculum within a caring and friendly environment'.
- The school works with The Manchester College and Hopwood Hall College.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning and looked at pupils' workbooks and assessment information on their progress and attainment.
- The inspector held meetings with the proprietor, executive headteacher, headteacher, teachers and other staff. Short interviews took place with all pupils. Questionnaires submitted by eight members of staff were scrutinised, as well as surveys of pupils', parents' and placing authorities' views. There were no responses to Parent View.
- Telephone discussions took place with social workers from a placing authority.
- The inspector examined a range of documents. These included the school's reviews of its own performance, development plans, checks on the quality of teaching, safeguarding documentation, including risk assessments, and various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- At the time of the inspection a very small number of boys aged over 16 were attending two colleges. Although they are not on roll, information in the report relates to their achievement and social and personal development and that of other past pupils.
- The school's website was checked prior to the inspection.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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