

Ashcroft School

The Together Trust Centre, Schools Hill, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 1JE

Inspection dates

24 January 2018

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 1, 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)b, 2(1)(b)(i), 3(d), 3(e)

- The school has a clear curriculum policy that aims to nurture pupils' confidence and resourcefulness so that they become independent learners. These aims translate well into classroom practice. Knowledgeable and caring staff cater for the needs and aptitudes of all pupils by planning and reviewing carefully thought-out schemes of work. The staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the subjects being taught and of pupils' needs. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary. The school's curriculum policy is currently under review in light of the potential changes to incorporate key stage 1 provision into the school.

Paragraph 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2)(i), 3(i)

- Teachers foster an appreciation of fundamental British values through schemes of work that develop pupils' respect for others. The nurture provision in key stage 2 provides strong personal and social education that assists pupils to understand themselves and their place in modern British society. Older pupils feel well prepared for the future and have ambitious career aspirations. Schemes of work respond to the needs of individual pupils and are adapted to their ages and aptitudes. This current practice can be easily adapted to suit the needs of younger pupils.

Paragraph 2(2)a, 2(2)(b)

- Pupils explore a wide and diverse curriculum which includes rich opportunities for them to develop their speaking and listening skills. Schemes of work for English and mathematics are in place as a framework for learning for the proposed key stage 1 provision. Plans for other subjects have not yet been developed. Leaders have decided that these plans are to be devised once the staff have been appointed for these classes. In the rest of the school, plans across the curriculum are adapted effectively to provide each pupil with a personalised learning experience.

Paragraph 2(2)d, 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 3(j)

- The provision for pupils' personal, social, health and economic development is a clear strength of the school. Leaders have set a climate in which pupils make considerable progress in developing their personal and social skills, reflecting the school's aims. There is a strong promotion of equalities. Pupils are accepting of one another and they actively celebrate difference. Pupils talk about the point at which they joined the school as a landmark in their lives. This is because staff help pupils to accept and understand themselves as well as others. This is a powerful outcome for these pupils. Many practitioners and other agency professionals have experience of working with pupils in key stage 1.

Paragraph 2(2)h, 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c)

- Pupils are engaged in their learning and they have opportunities to progress in all aspects of their education. Highly differentiated work, as evidenced in pupils' books, shows that they acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding. Well-planned lessons spark pupils' interest in their work so that they become self-motivated learners who think for themselves. This leads some pupils to achieve well at GCSE level by the end of key stage 4. All pupils move on to employment or further education.

Paragraph 3(f)

- Classroom resources for the proposed key stage 1 provision have not yet been purchased. However, those in the rest of the school are of a good quality and support pupils' learning and interest in a range of subjects. One such example is the school's recent purchase of a special kiln for use in key stage 4 to produce artwork and jewellery made from glass.

Paragraph 3(g), 4

- Assessment and planning systems are used to inform future learning opportunities so that pupils progress well. The framework for assessment is both formative and summative. Leaders make checks on the quality of teaching and learning and evaluate the performance of pupils by tracking the progress that they make. Standardised assessments and qualifications provide further evidence of achievement. The school ensures that parents and carers are informed of the progress made by pupils through regular reviews of their individualised plans.

Paragraph 3(h)

- The school's management of behaviour is a strength. Pupils comment favourably on how staff go the extra mile to understand them as individuals. Records show that any behaviour incidents inform a pupil's individual risk assessment so that potential issues in the future are minimised. Logs of behaviour are comprehensive and detail clear actions to support pupils' behaviour.
- Leaders have ensured that standards in this part are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The school's safeguarding policy relates well to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The headteacher is stringent in ensuring that all staff understand statutory guidance. She has been successful in creating a culture of vigilance within the school. There is a clear commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils that is shared by all staff. Leaders ensure that communication between staff and other agencies is focused on pupils' well-being. There is good communication with parents and carers about pupils' safeguarding needs.

Paragraph 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c), 10

- The school's behaviour policy is implemented effectively and is backed by a comprehensive system of monitoring pupils' behaviour. Pupils speak highly of staff as the school's 'best and most distinctive characteristic'. This is because staff take the time to understand pupils' needs. The school has a clear anti-bullying strategy and pupils are taught about the effects of bullying as many have been subject to this in their previous settings. The pupils that the inspector spoke to believe that bullying is rare at Ashcroft School.
- Leaders have ensured that standards in this part are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)(c)

- The school's safeguarding policy and procedures are published on the school's website.
- Leaders have ensured that standards in this part are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	106162
DfE registration number	356/6025
Inspection number	10045045

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	SEMH – social, emotional and mental health
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Together Trust
Chair	Mr Roger Horne
Headteacher	Mrs Eileen Sheerin
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,075
Telephone number	0161 283 4848
Website	www.togethertrust.org.uk/special-education/ashcroft-school
Email address	ashcroft.school@togethertrust.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	21–23 June 2016

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	8 to 18	5 to 18	5 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	140	160	160

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	80	95
Number of part-time pupils	24	29
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	88	108
Of which, number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan	57	77
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan	57	77

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	14	17
Number of part-time teaching staff	4	7
Number of staff in the welfare provision	34	37

Information about this school

- Ashcroft School is an independent day school which provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties some of whom have additional needs.
- The school is part of the Together Trust which provides residential care, foster care, social work and educational services.
- The school takes pupils from 14 different local authorities.
- Pupils join the school throughout the school year, many following exclusion or long-term absence from mainstream schools.
- Most pupils have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Many of these

pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

- The school uses three alternative providers to meet the needs of some pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The school is currently registered for 8- to 18-year-old pupils and has applied for a material change to be registered for 5- to 18-year-old pupils.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and other staff to discuss a range of issues about the school's educational provision and safeguarding.
- School policies and curriculum plans were considered as evidence to support the school's material change request and its likelihood of meeting the independent school standards.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning alongside the headteacher.
- The inspector gathered pupils' views about the school both in lessons and when speaking to a small group of pupils.
- The inspector looked at a small sample of work produced by pupils in subjects across the curriculum.
- The inspector met with teaching staff to discuss aspects of safeguarding, planning and assessment.
- The inspector visited the site of the proposed key stage 1 and 2 provision which is co-located with a local maintained primary school.
- A range of safeguarding evidence was considered as part of this inspection.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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