

Ashgate Specialist Support Primary School

Crossacres Road, Wythenshawe, Manchester M22 5DR

Inspection dates

2–3 April 2019

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
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders have created a school where the individual pupil is at the heart of everything. Staff know and understand the needs of every pupil. They work closely with parents and carers to plan targets that support the holistic development of pupils. Consequently, pupils are thriving and make exceptional progress.
- The school mission statement: 'we learn, we overcome challenges, we support each other and achieve our potential', is what this school does extremely well.
- Staff are skilled in planning activities that meet pupils' individual learning and personal needs. Classroom environments reflect the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of each group. This personalisation is the key that supports every pupil to thrive.
- Equality of opportunity is central. Leaders want all pupils to benefit from a wide range of subjects, topics and learning experiences both in and out of the classroom.
- Communication and life skills are also pivotal. Pupils in this school have a voice. Staff unlock barriers to learning and find a method for pupils to communicate their needs. Pupils learn to make choices and understand that they have rights and responsibilities.
- Governors know the school well. They speak with confidence and clarity about the school's strengths and their ambitions for the future.
- Children in the early years provision make outstanding progress from very low starting points. Leaders have created a warm, welcoming, happy and secure environment where pupils learn and develop through play.
- Staff see behaviour as a means of communication. They are skilled at identifying what a pupil may be communicating through their behaviour. A range of interventions are successful in meeting the individual needs of pupils so that barriers to learning are removed.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly happy with and supportive of the school. There were many positive comments and one summarised the views of many others in saying: 'There is a real open-door policy for home-to-school communication. From the headteacher to the teaching assistants, everyone has a real understanding of the individual child. My child is happy to go to school every day and I could not feel more confident that he is receiving the very best support and education. We are proud to be part of the Ashgate family.'
- The school offers a valued outreach service which has the capacity to expand.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Widen the collaborative outreach work so that outstanding practice can be shared with other schools.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- This is an aspirational school where the whole community strives for excellence and success. Leaders have an accurate and detailed knowledge of the school. They know what they want to achieve and are ambitious for continuous improvement. This culture permeates the whole staff team. Staff are proud to work at Ashgate School and appreciate the range of opportunities to develop their skills further.
- The curriculum has been designed thoughtfully. Leaders have a clear rationale: all pupils should benefit from a wide-ranging curriculum that also meets their individual needs. Equality of opportunity is the foundation stone. Leaders work hard to ensure that the pupils are able to benefit from the same opportunities as those in mainstream schools. For example, during the inspection, pupils enjoyed a visit to a local art exhibition. They worked with other mainstream schools to explore and enjoy books for national story-telling week. This is a crucial part of preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum which supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils learn about themselves, each other and the wider world. They learn about rights and responsibilities both through teaching and through enrichment activities. For instance, pupils help to raise money for charities including Red Nose Day as well as being involved in local community litter picking. The school has worked with local businesses and visitor attractions to support them to be fully inclusive and accessible for pupils with SEND. This work has recently been recognised when the school was awarded the UNICEF Rights Respecting School silver award.
- Communication and life skills are a vital part of the curriculum. The school uses a number of communication systems so that all pupils are supported to find their voice. Pupils were observed actively using their personalised systems. For example, pupils asked for specific food and drink during snack time through picture, symbol, verbal and technology aids. Staff promote independence and life skills. Pupils take responsibility for setting tables and clearing away plates. Staff also promote independence by offering pupils a choice of activity. Pupils decide what activity they want to do next and use their communication system to state their choice.
- The physical education (PE) and sport funding for primary schools is used very well. The school and community facilities are used to ensure that all pupils have access to swimming lessons. Pupils have gained in water confidence and some have achieved their 25-metre certificate. Some pupils also attended the city-wide swimming gala. Funding also supports pupils to experience pony riding, outdoor residential activities and cycling.
- The outreach team offers local mainstream schools support and advice. They support their mainstream colleagues in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND so that they make expected progress. Leaders also offer opportunities for district colleagues to attend training workshops within Ashgate School. Workshops have included working with autism spectrum disorder, nurture environments and communication methods. Feedback from mainstream colleagues was extremely positive because staff could see

how to transfer good practice back into their own schools. Leaders have plans to widen this collaborative work to reach additional schools and share their outstanding practice.

Governance of the school

- Governors work very effectively with senior leaders to provide clear strategic direction. They uphold the school's values and ethos to ensure that the school keeps the individual child at the heart of all it does.
- Governors have clear roles and responsibilities across all areas of the school. Through regular visits and catch-up meetings with leaders, they know the school extremely well. They hold leaders to account and complete their strategic roles very effectively. They know the school's strengths and are ambitious for the school to continue to improve.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a very strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Regular safeguarding meetings with the safeguarding governor, early help lead and the school nurse ensure that all vulnerable pupils are very well supported. Referrals to the local authority and other agencies are undertaken quickly and the designated safeguarding lead is persistent in obtaining the appropriate external agency support.
- Parents appreciate the early help and support they receive. They talk positively about the impact of early help and the difference it makes at home. Relationships with families are valued and the multi-agency approach works well to support pupils and the wider family.
- The high staff-to-pupil ratio helps to keep pupils safe at all times. Staff are highly vigilant and know the individual needs of every pupil. As a result, they are able to respond quickly to any changes in behaviour that may indicate a cause for concern.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Each classroom has its own unique identity. Teachers plan the environment and the resources to match the individual needs of the pupils. For pupils who need a lot of sensory stimulation, the room contains an abundance of resources to stimulate the senses. For example, feathers and bells hanging on a frame encourage pupils to reach out to experience the textures and sounds. In other classrooms, teachers have minimised the resources so pupils are not overwhelmed by colour, sounds or objects. This personalisation allows every pupil to settle in their environment, reduces their anxiety and increases their readiness to learn.
- Each teacher is highly skilled in planning activities that allow pupils to excel. The holistic approach ensures that the personal, physical, social, emotional and academic progress of pupils are all of equal importance. For example, in one class pupils were reading and performing characters from a book. Some pupils were pre-readers and enjoying acting out the part. Other pupils were reading along, delighted in prompting the 'what next,' while the more-able pupils were reading silently. In another class during snack time, the focus was on encouraging pupils to try different flavours and types of food. The staff member used a range of tactics including humour and

modelling to slowly encourage pupils to experience and enjoy new flavours.

- Teachers use the education, health and care plans (EHC plans) to set targets for pupils. Long-term targets are broken down into small achievable goals. The small steps of progress are regularly recorded by staff. Leaders monitor the progress of pupils to make sure that targets are precise, meaningful and challenging. This meticulous process is working very well. The school's own records demonstrate that pupils are making excellent progress from their starting points.
- Teachers and teaching assistants plan effectively together. The range of activities within each class keeps pupils engaged and motivated in their learning. Staff are highly skilled and know how to break learning down into small, achievable steps. Pupils enjoy a range of creative and exciting activities. For example, pupils enjoyed an Easter egg hunt in the school gardens followed by a picnic, where they sat together to eat and share their eggs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The wide-ranging enrichment opportunities develop pupils' social skills and confidence. Visits to cafés, museums, tourist attractions and parks enable pupils to become familiar and comfortable in public places. Parents were particularly positive about the impact this has on their family life. Parents explained how they are able to enjoy family meals in restaurants and family holidays without the anxiety of previous years.
- The outside spaces support and meet pupils' sensory needs well. The play areas and equipment allow pupils to cycle, run, jump, throw bean bags or just be in a quiet place. Staff take part in games and play football, catch and other activities so that pupils are able to return to class ready to learn.
- Pupils receive excellent support from a range of external professionals. On-site physiotherapists and speech and language therapists work collaboratively to support pupils' physical and communication needs highly effectively. An art therapist works with individuals or small groups of pupils. For example, Year 6 pupils are supported through working together to explore what it will be like to move to their new high schools. They are able to share worries and help each other to be prepared for their next step in education.
- Staff encourage and model safe behaviour. For example, pupils know to shake hands with school visitors as they are not a familiar face. Pupils said that they feel safe in school because staff care for them and help with worries or problems. Pupils also spoke about using computers safely. They know they should tell a trusted adult if anything made them feel uncomfortable. Pupils told inspectors about road safety and using the pelican crossing system correctly.

The school's open culture is appreciated by parents, pupils, staff and external agencies. They all spoke of being able to talk openly and being listened to. Leaders are quick to respond to requests or concerns. This culture has resulted in a supportive school where the whole community works together to overcome challenges so that every pupil is

able to achieve their potential.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Staff are highly skilled in identifying what pupils are communicating through their behaviour. Some pupils do not have the language or understanding to express their feelings. However, staff have the patience and skill to work out what each child needs.
- A range of targeted interventions within school meet pupils' sensory and behaviour needs very well. Rebound therapy is used for pupils who need to jump or bounce before being able to settle to learning. The school also has provision for pupils who benefit from additional support through nurture activities. For all pupils, the personalised intervention has had a very positive impact on behaviour.
- Pupils and parents report that there is no bullying in school. The school's work on respect and human rights supports pupils to understand and accept each other's differences. Staff encourage and model politeness at all times. Pupils are supported to use good manners. The focus on respect, manners and acceptance has created a school where pupils get on well together and enjoy each other's company.
- Pupils' attendance is above the average for similar schools nationally. Leaders work closely with families to identify and overcome any barriers to attendance. Staff provide a range of appropriate support for any pupils whose medical or complex needs may be adversely affecting their attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- The school's own detailed assessment system and pupils' learning records show that, throughout their time in school, pupils make outstanding progress, often from very low starting points. The holistic approach, with its emphasis on personal as well as academic progress, ensures that pupils' progress is captured in the round.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as, and in some cases better than, other pupils. This is because leaders have been clear in identifying barriers to learning. Additional funding has been used creatively to support pupils' individual needs, including speech and language support, reading and therapeutic interventions.
- Some children in the early years make exceptional progress over a very short space of time. Staff take time to work with parents to really get to know each child before they start school. This ensures a smooth start and children settle quickly into their new school.

Leaders work with parents from Year 5 onwards to plan the move to high school. This allows plenty of time to prepare pupils for their next stage of education. A leavers assembly at the end of Year 6 celebrates each pupil's time at school. They all receive a 'my life at Ashgate' file with all their 'wow' moments, achievements and experiences recorded.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The early years environment is well planned to include specific learning areas. A quiet room, messy room, social area and outdoor spaces allow children to move around and enjoy a variety of activities. This welcoming and stimulating environment helps children settle quickly into their daily routine.
- Staff assess all children within the first half term following their start in school. Children's progress is carefully tracked across the year. This information is used to plan the next steps in learning or personal development to meet the individual needs of each child. This personalised system is having a very positive impact on the progress of children in the early years.
- Learning is planned with an emphasis on developing children's communication and independent skills. Strong links with external agencies contribute to the planning for support that each child needs to enable them to achieve their potential.
- Transition from Reception to Year 1 is well thought through and planned. Children join other pupils in the dining room for lunch on a daily basis throughout the year. They also attend whole-school assemblies and Christmas plays. This collaboration ensures that children moving from Reception are already comfortable and confident in the main school building.
- Teachers plan exciting, creative and meaningful activities for the children, both inside and outside the classroom. Children enjoy time in the wildlife garden, pony rides and visits to local parks and supermarkets.
- Excellent relationships are the foundation of the success of the early years provision. Staff work closely with parents to establish and build a solid, positive relationship with each child. This secure attachment helps children to become confident, resilient and eager to learn.
- All welfare requirements are fully met within the early years provision.

School details

Unique reference number	127802
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10057979

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Blowey
Headteacher	Diane Wolstenholme
Telephone number	0161 3595322
Website	http://www.ashgateprimaryschool.co.uk/
Email address	admin@ashgate.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 March 2018

Information about this school

- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion speak English as an additional language. There are more boys than girls on roll.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in the majority of classes. All observations on day one of the inspection were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also carried out work and progress scrutinies with senior leaders.
- Inspectors talked with pupils informally throughout the inspection. They also met formally with one group of pupils. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders. A meeting was held with six members of the governing body including the chair and vice-chair. A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 18 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey. Inspectors also spoke to parents formally and informally.
- Inspectors took account of the 21 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and the one response to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and development plan, information about pupils' progress and outcomes, EHC plans, and a range of policies including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

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