

# Inspection of Ashton Sixth-Form College

Inspection dates: 8–21 January 2020

## Overall effectiveness

**Outstanding**

The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Outstanding</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

Ashton Sixth-Form College (ASFC) was established in 1980 following a reorganisation of secondary education in the borough of Tameside. It became a 16 to 19 Academy in February 2019. ASFC offers a range of provision for 16 to 19 year-old students who follow a full-time study programme, as well as adult and higher education provision. Students are drawn mainly from Tameside schools, but a significant and growing number come from schools in the neighbouring boroughs.

At the time of the inspection, 2,158 students studied education programmes for young people, 104 followed adult learning programmes and eleven students had high needs. The vast majority of 16 to 19 year-old students study A levels, a full vocational programme or a 'mixed' A-level and vocational pathway at level 3. Students at level 2 follow a vocational programme alongside GCSE English and/or mathematics. Most adult students study English and/or mathematics at level 2 or below. Other adult qualifications are based around the development and training of teaching assistants.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Students' behaviour is exemplary and in keeping with the college's high expectations and values. Students are exceptionally polite, self-assured, respectful and resourceful. They enjoy their studies, take pride in their work and have an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards their learning. Students gain the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours they need to be successful in their next steps.

Students are extremely well supported by staff and their peers. Pastoral and academic support is exceptional. Staff help students to achieve high grades and produce work to a consistently high standard. Adult students returning to education develop their confidence and self-belief. For example, they develop the skills to be able to help their children with their mathematics homework. Staff accurately identify and meet the support needs of students with high needs. As a result, students develop their independence over time, which improves their life chances.

Students, including those who need extra help, benefit from a highly inclusive learning environment. They know what they want to do next and receive the support they need to achieve it. Students achieve their qualifications and make well-informed and aspirational decisions about their next steps.

Students develop their confidence, resilience and strong independence skills. They talk confidently about what they now know and can do because of their learning programmes. For example, students have gained part-time jobs in retail, because of the strong communication skills they learn in their lessons.

Students feel safe at the college. They develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders and governors are highly ambitious for their students. They are committed to providing the highest-quality education to help students achieve their best possible outcome. Leaders and governors promote exceptionally high standards and pursue excellence in teaching, learning and assessment across all areas of the college. Leaders accurately identify best practice and areas for improvement. They use this to inform teachers' staff development. Governors consistently hold senior leaders to account to sustain high-quality provision for all students. They act swiftly and incisively to eradicate the very few areas of underperformance. As a result, staff at all levels have a shared vision for ensuring the best possible education for their students. Students strive to be the best they can be.

Teachers benefit from well-planned staff development activities that develop their subject knowledge and expertise. These are highly effective in improving the craft of teaching. Staff are trusted to be innovative in their practices but understand their responsibility to help develop high-performing students who achieve excellent results. For

example, teachers who are the only teacher of their subject pair with high-performing staff and departments in other colleges to share best practice, teaching strategies and resources. As a result, a culture of self-improvement and continuous improvement permeates the college. Students benefit from high-quality teaching and learning.

Students enjoy an extremely well-planned curriculum that teaches them much more than the knowledge they need to pass their qualifications. For example, students study the impact of European law on English law. They research cases and evaluate the impact of Brexit and the referendum. Consequently, students develop the knowledge and skills to discuss current issues in their wider social networks.

Teachers use highly effective teaching and assessment strategies to identify what students understand and can do and what they need to learn. They teach the curriculum in a logical order. Teachers carefully plan and explain how new knowledge fits into the bigger picture. They build in frequent opportunities for students to practise their skills and to recall and develop their knowledge even further. As a result, students learn more and remember more. They prepare successfully for further study or employment.

Managers, teachers and staff provide students with highly effective and impartial careers information, advice and guidance before and during their programmes. This enables students to make well-informed and aspirational decisions about their future. For example, personal tutors invite guest speakers to talk to students about routes into industry, including employers of people with disabilities and those with specific BME recruitment strategies. Students benefit from the 'realising aspirations' programme that facilitates applications to many of the UK's top universities. Consequently, students have high aspirations for their next steps. Most move into higher education.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority. The designated safeguarding officer (DSO) is very well trained and experienced to carry out the role effectively. The DSO and safeguarding team use appropriate procedures to record, action and follow up safeguarding issues. Staff benefit from regular training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty and know how to report any concerns. Managers carry out appropriate staff checks during the recruitment process.

Students know who to talk to if they are concerned about the safety and welfare of themselves or others. Students have a good understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, including local risks.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146816
<b>Address</b>	Darnton Road Ashton-Under-Lyne OL6 9RL
<b>Contact number</b>	01613302330
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.asfc.ac.uk">www.asfc.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Anton McGrath
<b>Provider type</b>	16 to 19 Academy
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	none

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

Alastair Mollon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Alison Humphreys	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elaine Price	Her Majesty's Inspector
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