

Inspection of a good school: Ashfield Comprehensive School

Sutton Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG17 8HP

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 October 2021

Outcome

Ashfield Comprehensive School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of being part of Ashfield Comprehensive School. They enjoy coming to school and feel safe. The school is a calm, safe and supportive place for pupils. The ASPIRE values of the school shape how pupils conduct themselves. Behaviour is very good across the school. Pupils are friendly and polite to each other, staff and visitors. Pupils say that the school is inclusive and even though it is a large school, it has a genuine community feel.

Bullying is not tolerated at the school. Pupils say it hardly ever happens and if it does staff take it seriously and act quickly to resolve any issues. Parents agree that their children are safe at the school and that behaviour is well managed by staff.

The headteacher and leaders have very high expectations. Their vision for the school is shared by everyone involved. Leaders want the best for every pupil. They have ensured that the curriculum offers a large range of options for all pupils. Pupils enjoy their lessons and like the many opportunities that the school offers them. There are lots of activities available outside of school hours that are well attended by pupils.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Highly effective leaders have ensured that the curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. They want pupils to be engaged in their learning. Subject leaders and teachers achieve this by thinking deeply about their subjects. They carefully plan sequenced lessons which build up pupils' knowledge. This happens best in subjects where leaders have identified the important knowledge pupils must know and remember. Some subject areas are further behind in this area than others. Leaders are making sure there is support in place so that these subjects match the effective practice seen in the other subjects.

Pupils choose which subjects they want to study in more depth at the end of Year 8. Their first two years at the school help them make informed choices. The breadth of the curriculum is not narrowed at key stage 3. The broad curriculum offer includes many

courses that prepare pupils well for careers in industries like construction, engineering, catering, and hair and beauty. Pupils have excellent opportunities to develop their skills in these areas. The school has also seen an increase in the numbers of pupils selecting subjects that form part of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). There is an increase in the number of pupils choosing modern foreign languages, for example, because of the positive experiences they have had in this subject. Leaders have ensured that decisions about the qualifications offered at the school are made in the best interests of all learners.

The work in pupils' books and displayed elsewhere is of a high quality and shows how pupils are developing the required knowledge and skills. Work produced by sixth-form students shows how the development in the curriculum lower down in the school has prepared them well for their current studies.

Staff regularly check how well pupils remember what they have learned. Teachers ask questions to check that pupils understand what is being taught. This helps teachers to have an accurate understanding of what pupils know and what they still need to learn. There is a new method of checking pupils' understanding in mathematics. Leaders are assessing how effective it is.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Staff receive detailed guidance on how to support pupils with SEND so that they adapt the curriculum to meet their needs. They use this guidance well to help pupils with SEND to build up their knowledge over time.

Pupils and students in the sixth form have many opportunities available to them that broaden their personal development. These include taking part in the upcoming school performance of 'Sister Act' and many sporting activities. Pupils can also be subject ambassadors. They provide teachers with useful feedback on the learning experience in their lessons.

Personal development lessons are a regular feature in Year 7 and 8 but reduce from Year 9 onwards. These opportunities allow pupils to consider a range of social and moral issues. Pupils receive careers guidance throughout their time at the school.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate leaders' efforts to improve well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of vigilance at the school. All staff are reminded regularly that, 'It could happen here'. Staff receive high-quality training in safeguarding and updates from experienced safeguarding leaders. Staff understand their responsibility to report any concern. Leaders keep accurate records and use these to identify local safeguarding issues. They are quick to act, involving other agencies when needed. They have appropriate procedures to manage any allegations.

Safeguarding leaders work effectively with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils get the support they need. Leaders have carefully checked the alternative provisions the school uses.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that all subjects have clearly identified the key knowledge pupils need to know. As a result, some pupils in these subjects do not develop the important knowledge that they should have by the end of key stage 3. Across all subjects, leaders should ensure that it is clear what knowledge and skills pupils need to learn in key stage 3, so that teachers can plan teaching that helps pupils develop a secure understanding of each subject before moving on to their key stage 4 studies.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Ashfield Comprehensive School, to be good in March 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137981
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10199664
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2,705
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	661
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ruth Wheelhouse
Headteacher	John Maher
Website	www.ashfield.notts.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	1 and 2 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Ashfield Comprehensive School is a larger than average 11 to 18 secondary school serving the town of Kirkby-in-Ashfield and the surrounding area.
- The school uses one registered provider of alternative provision and four unregistered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at

curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at the curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors telephoned one alternative provision the school uses.
- Inspectors heard children in different year groups read books.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the local governing body and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors spoke with two representatives from The Two Counties Trust.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school development plan.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Ofsted Parent View and considered the results of the Ofsted staff and pupil questionnaires.
- To judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors read the school's relevant policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and met with the designated lead for safeguarding. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Rakesh Patel

Her Majesty's Inspector

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