

Inspection of Ashbourne Independent School

17 Old Court Place, Kensington, London, W8 4PL

Inspection dates: 7–9 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being part of a diverse community of people from all over the world. Teachers encourage them to be confident and independent, while providing a safety net of support. Pupils respect their teachers. They enjoy professional relationships. Staff have high aspirations for all pupils. In return, pupils are ambitious and driven to achieve the best possible results. They receive tailored and individual support with applications to top universities and apprenticeships.

Pupils feel safe at school. Their mental health is given high priority. Behaviour is exemplary. Staff do not tolerate bullying or harassment of any kind.

Staff provide many extra-curricular and educational opportunities for pupils outside of lessons. There are recreational outings such as go-karting and cinema trips for pupils in Year 11. Teachers organise various outings. These take advantage of the college's location in central London. Sixth-form students visit museums, art galleries and the theatre as part of their studies. They can choose from a huge variety of lunchtime and after-school clubs. Some of these are subject based to further develop students' love of learning. Others encourage physical activity, such as football, climbing, yoga and Afro-beats dancing. These clubs are popular.

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

All pupils experience a broad and flexible curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, pupils study compulsory subjects and can select from a range that appeal to their interests. Sixth-form students can choose any combination of A levels, selected from a large range of subjects.

Teachers are experts in their subjects. They go above and beyond the examination requirements in lessons. Pupils typically said this makes their learning 'three dimensional'. Teachers make adaptations to the order in which they teach the examination course. They do this to give pupils the building blocks of knowledge to help them progress to more-complex topics.

Teachers insist that pupils use precise subject-specific terms. They check pupils' understanding of terminology and topics in class, and quiz them on their prior learning. Teachers also go back over subject content as necessary to help pupils become confident in their learning.

Staff achieve a balance between encouraging pupils' independence and offering support. Pupils attend well, arrive to lessons on time and work hard. At the same time, teachers are always there to help them. They provide subject 'clinics' each week. These, along with small class sizes, help to ensure all pupils make excellent progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) also benefit from this. Leaders of SEND work with teachers to help them plan for specific needs.

Each subject area gives pupils access to an online curriculum. This is a list of books, magazines, podcasts, and news articles which deepen pupils' subject knowledge. Pupils feed back to their class on the extra reading they have completed. This encourages independence and prepares students for university study.

Staff work hard to expand sixth-form students' learning beyond the academic. There is a vast and well-planned programme of enrichment activities. This ranges from sport to performing arts and to debating as part of the 'critical thinking group'. Sixth-form students can take part in a 'mock United Nations' and can join the student-led 'artificial intelligence club'. Staff organise recreational and academic trips. Sixth-form students have the chance to visit a European city every year.

The development of leadership skills is a focus within the school. Many sixth-form students take part in the student council. They organise events such as the school's annual revue. Others arrange activities to raise money for charities. Students in the sixth form take on mentoring roles to support each other with academic work.

Pupils enjoy the cultural diversity of their school. They learn about the religious beliefs, language, food and culture of peers from many countries. Pupils respect the views of others. Their behaviour is excellent. They are polite to each other and to visitors. As a result, lessons have no disruption to learning.

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. They receive expert and individual guidance. The school holds a careers fair each year. In Year 11, pupils have an impartial careers interview. Staff make sure that pupils who are interested in apprenticeships are well supported. Students in Year 13 have a tutor dedicated to the university application process. This helps them gain places at top universities.

The proprietor and director of studies work hard to meet legal requirements. As a result, the independent school standards are met in full. Leaders seek ways to make the school better. They have improved the library facilities since the last inspection, for example. Leaders have consulted with parents on relationships and sex education. Staff ensure that pupils receive expert and age-appropriate input on topics such as consent.

Leaders are approachable and supportive of staff workload. They provide opportunities for professional development that take teachers beyond their subject areas. Leaders ensure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team meets all pupils at the college when they enrol. They assess any potential needs early on and regularly review the support in place for individuals.

Several staff are mental health first aiders. They know how to recognise issues and provide appropriate help. All staff have had up-to-date training, including for online safety and peer-on-peer abuse. They subscribe to the school's 'five golden rules' of safeguarding.

The safeguarding team refers to external agencies as needed. The proprietor ensures that appropriate pre-recruitment checks are in place. He provides time and support for members of the safeguarding team to do their job effectively.

The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and reflects current guidance.

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

School details

Unique reference number	100537
DfE registration number	207/6348
Local authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	10205913
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 21
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	202
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Michael Kirby
Headteacher	Michael Kirby
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,500
Telephone number	020 7937 3858
Website	www.ashbournecollege.co.uk
Email address	admin@ashbournecollege.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January–2 February 2018

Information about this school

- Ashbourne is an independent school providing education for 13- to 21-year-olds studying GCSEs and A levels. Most students are enrolled on two-year A-level courses.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected from 31 January to 2 February 2018 when it was judged to be good.
- The school has two premises. One is at 17 Old Court Place, Kensington, London W8 4PL. The second is at Young Street, Kensington, London W8.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- 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 met with the proprietor, who is also the principal, the director of studies and senior leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: economics, philosophy and physics. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, reviewed students' and pupils' work, met with students and pupils to discuss their learning, and met with subject leaders and teachers.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and had discussions about some other subjects.
- Through discussions with leaders, staff, pupils and students, inspectors considered the effectiveness of safeguarding. The inspection team spoke to staff about their workload in school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and students, and staff. They also considered responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors toured both sites. They scrutinised a wide range of documentary evidence to check on the statutory requirements of the independent school standards. This included checking the school's admissions register, risk assessments, attendance information and safeguarding training.

Inspection team

Lisa Strong, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Radomsky

Her Majesty's Inspector

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