

Inspection of The Ashwood Academy

Ashwood Way, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG23 8AA

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders do not do enough to make sure that pupils are safe and attend school regularly. Too many pupils are routinely absent and this is not challenged effectively. Although there have been recent improvements to the curriculum in some subjects, too few pupils benefit from these due to persistently low attendance.

Pupils who do attend school feel safer since the arrival of new leaders this year, who have introduced clearer expectations of behaviour. These pupils also have the opportunity to learn about how to stay healthy and safe as part of their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons. They learn about careers and are encouraged to think about their next steps, with the majority moving on to the local college. However, lessons are often disrupted because teachers do not always ensure that pupils stay focused on their learning. Often, the things pupils are taught do not take into account what they already know or reflect high expectations of them.

Parents and carers of those pupils attending are generally positive about recent changes to the school. For example, they welcome the introduction of a school uniform and the greater visibility of leaders.

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

Governors and trustees have not challenged low standards and expectations with sufficient urgency. Those responsible for governance lack the capacity and expertise to tackle weaknesses in the school. Standards in all areas have fallen significantly since the last inspection. Attendance is very low. When in school, the standard of education pupils receive is variable and often poor. There has not been sufficient oversight of safeguarding arrangements by governors and trustees, and these are ineffective.

Leaders lack the capacity to make the urgent improvements necessary in this school. Virtually all leaders are new to role and in the very early stages of making changes. Leaders' self-evaluation and plans for developing the school lack the ambition needed to tackle deep-seated issues such as the entrenched culture of non-attendance.

Senior leaders have started to improve behaviour in the school. They make themselves visible in and around the school and greet pupils when they arrive each morning. This work has been successful in ensuring that there is a calm start to the day and that pupils feel safe. Pupils say that bullying is uncommon. When there is unkind or aggressive behaviour, leaders take appropriate action.

Leaders recognise that not enough pupils come to school. It is much more usual for pupils to be absent than present. Leaders have not tackled this effectively or with enough urgency. Policies and procedures for making sure pupils attend school are

not having an impact. Of the minority of pupils who attend school, a significant number do not arrive on time. Lateness is also not being challenged successfully.

Leaders recognise that they need to improve the quality of the curriculum but are in the very early stages of acting on this. Although they have made sure that pupils are taught a greater number of subjects, the plans to deliver them vary substantially in quality and ambition. In some subjects, including English and mathematics, assessment is not being used well to find out what pupils already know. As a result, learning in lessons is often poorly adapted to meet pupils' needs. Often this leads to pupils becoming disengaged because learning is overly repetitive.

Leaders' plans for the PSHE curriculum and careers programme are suitably broad and relevant. However, only the small number of pupils who attend school regularly benefit fully from this. Beyond the taught curriculum, leaders have not considered opportunities for pupils to develop their own interests and talents. Similarly, there is no structured approach to helping pupils improve their behaviour so that they can return to a mainstream school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders and trustees are aware of weaknesses in the school's safeguarding but have not taken sufficient action to address these. There are some gaps in safeguarding records, where information has not been shared by a child's previous school or multiple record-keeping systems have been used and information is not comprehensive. Leaders in the school find it difficult to explain the steps that they have taken to protect pupils when they have concerns about their welfare. In some cases, not enough action has been taken to check that pupils are safe. This is particularly the case with regard to those pupils who are frequently absent or have reduced timetables. Leaders do refer concerns on to other agencies when appropriate. However, they do not always follow up to make sure that appropriate support has been put in place. Following a recent safeguarding review, leaders have made improvements to the checks carried out on adults who work at the school. Nevertheless, further changes are required to recruitment procedures to ensure that they comply with the latest statutory guidance.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The attendance of pupils is too low and is not showing sustained improvement. Most pupils are not attending school each day. Leaders' policies and plans to improve attendance are ineffective. Leaders need to review their procedures urgently and work with families to make sure that more pupils attend school consistently.

- Arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Adults do not know whether pupils are safe because attendance is low and the systems for checking on absent pupils are not used consistently. Some safeguarding records are unclear or incomplete. Trustees and governors need to make sure that their systems for checking on safeguarding are working and that all involved have the required expertise.
- There is not a suitably ambitious curriculum in place for all subjects. Lessons are often repetitive because teachers do not consider what pupils already know. Leaders must make sure that the plans for the curriculum provide enough information to support teachers. They should also provide effective training so that teachers understand how to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and adapt their teaching in response. This will help to ensure that, when pupils are in school, the lessons they receive enable them to make progress.
- Leaders' plans for improving the school are not ambitious or urgent enough. Trustees have not provided sufficient oversight to assure themselves that key weaknesses are being tackled quickly. As a result, the school has declined substantially in all areas since the last inspection. Leaders and trustees must sharpen their approach to self-evaluation and make sure the actions they take as a result make a difference to those areas that matter most.

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.

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	141123
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10250062
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsored
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kath Grant
Headteacher	Stephen Griffiths
Website	www.ashwoodacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a pupil referral unit and accepts pupils from a number of other local secondary schools on a temporary placement, or those who have been permanently excluded.
- The school has had a high turnover of staff. Almost all teaching staff at the school began employment in September this year. The headteacher is new to the school from September and the executive principal joined the school at Easter this year.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders in the school, including the headteacher, the executive principal and other senior leaders. The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and the board of trustees, including the interim chief executive officer.
- The views of the local governing body were represented by trustees during the inspection. This was agreed on the basis that members of the local governing body, including the chair, were very recently appointed.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects, including PSHE.
- Inspectors judged the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures by meeting with leaders, scrutinising the single central record, sampling safeguarding records and talking with pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff and leaders about this aspect of their work.
- Inspectors considered survey responses from pupils and staff. As the number of responses to the parent survey were low, inspectors were only able to consider free-text comments.

Inspection team

Chris Ellison, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dave Euridge

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022