

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Ashmount School

Thorpe Hill, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 4SQ

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Inspection dates:

17 and 18 May 2023

## **Outcome**

Ashmount School continues to be an outstanding school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Ashmount provides an inspirational, safe and nurturing environment in which pupils thrive. Pupils love their education. Staff have a clear ambition and determination that every pupil should benefit from a rich, broad learning experience – and they do. Leaders ensure that pupils develop to become as confident, independent, healthy, creative, safe and as included as they can be.

Pupils are happy at Ashmount. They enjoy warm relationships with staff. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging. This helps them to feel safe. Pupils state that bullying does not happen here. They know that staff would help them if they had a worry and trust them to do so.

Pupils at Ashmount are friendly, respectful and supportive of each other. Behaviour at the school is exemplary. It is a calm and orderly environment for everyone. Sometimes, pupils need extra help to manage their feelings. Staff help them to become calm again so that they can get back on with their lessons as soon as possible. As a consequence, learning is not disrupted.

Aspirational leaders strive to ensure that pupils are as fully prepared for their adult lives as possible. All staff hold the highest of ambitions for every pupil, and pupils rise to these high expectations. For example, pupils relish competing in special Olympic sports at Loughborough University.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum which is ambitious for all pupils. They have carefully considered what pupils need to know and the order in which staff need to teach the knowledge and skills in the curriculum. Pupils experience a curriculum that more than mirrors the breadth of a mainstream curriculum.

Leaders have ensured that there is a total communication approach in school. All staff sign and encourage this in return. This means that verbal pupils can communicate with their non-verbal friends. Staff skilfully interact with pupils using a range of assisted communication systems such as Makaton, Picture Exchange Communication System and eye-driven communication.

Academic learning is seamlessly interwoven with therapeutic interventions. For example, expert staff combine physiotherapy in the school pool with physical development as part of the physical education (PE) curriculum.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Children start phonics in the early years. Pupils successfully learn to read or recognise symbols or words at a level that is appropriate for them. For example, staff support pupils to make, listen and respond to sounds in sensory sessions. Pupils enjoy the routines of learning sounds and blending them together to make words. They have books that match the sounds that they know. Consequently, many pupils learn to read and progress in speaking.

Each pupil has personalised targets based on their education, health and care plan (EHC) outcomes. Staff and therapists work together to help pupils achieve these. All staff are acutely aware of pupils' individual needs. Teachers monitor pupils' progress carefully, skilfully adapting teaching strategies as needed. Consequently, pupils achieve exceptionally well.

Leaders take every opportunity to increase pupils' independence and well-being. Leaders have recently invested in an innovative 'Drivedeck' to enable pupils to drive their own powered chair. Pupils and students will then be able to apply for their own motorised wheelchairs. This further promotes their independence.

Leaders support pupils' wider development through exceptionally well-thought-through provision. Adults support pupils to think about the choices they might make. Personal development knowledge increases in the sixth form. Here, students deepen their understanding about self-care, finance and risks in the community. They learn how to travel safely and independently. Students shop and cook. They enjoy work experience in the wider community, such as in the local café.

Leaders provide pupils with comprehensive, impartial careers guidance. 'Moving on Plans' support students to identify what they want to do next. Students leave Ashmount with a toolkit of skills which will enable them, and those supporting them, to build the best possible future.

All pupils go on a residential visit where they can do activities such as kayaking. Many pupils enjoy choir and pupils have performed on stage at the De Montfort Hall. Pupils also valued the recent work with an artist in residence. Many pupils complete 'Bikeability' courses alongside bike maintenance. Pupils enjoy horse riding and performing in ensembles together.

Staff teach pupils about fundamental British values. There is an active school council. For example, pupils wanted a wheelchair accessible swing and the council ensured that this

happened. Pupils develop their understanding of different faiths and enjoy visits to places of worship such as a mosque and mandir.

Leaders are relentless in their drive and determination to ensure that pupils receive the highest quality of education. Leaders ensure that all staff receive highly effective training. Staff work collaboratively to share specialist expertise and engage actively in research to enhance the provision.

Governors offer leaders high levels of support and challenge in equal measure. Staff are proud and happy to work at the school. They feel well supported by leaders, who are considerate of their workload and well-being.

The vast majority of parents and carers hold the school in very high regard, with a typical comment being: 'I cannot praise Ashmount more highly. All the staff go above and beyond every day to support my child. It is a wonderful school and we as a family feel so incredibly lucky that our child gets to attend there.'

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know all pupils and their families particularly well. Training means that staff are very knowledgeable about the additional safeguarding vulnerabilities of pupils that are a result of their SEND. Leaders act on any concerns swiftly.

Staff help pupils to understand and manage risks. Pupils feel safe in school. They know that staff will help them if they have a worry. Pupils learn about safety in the wider community. This includes keeping safe when using public transport, online safety and safety in relationships. Students in the sixth form complete a qualification which includes a module called 'safety in the community'.

Pre-employment checks on staff are rigorous.

## **Background**

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

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in March 2014.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	120352
<b>Local authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10254974
<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	195
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	25
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Jean Lewis
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Deacon
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ashmount.leics.sch.uk">www.ashmount.leics.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- All pupils at Ashmount school have an EHC plan. The majority of students have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), or complex autism spectrum conditions (ASC). In addition, some pupils with visual or hearing impairments, or a general learning delay, also attend this school.
- The number of pupils on roll has increased significantly over the last two years. Current building work will see this number rise further still.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

## 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.

- The lead inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and communication, mathematics, the creative curriculum, and PE and physical development. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to some pupils about their learning.
- To further look at the curriculum, the lead inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum plans in some other subjects, including looking at examples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the actions leaders take to keep pupils safe. The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks.
- The lead inspector met with pupils and students, both verbal and non-verbal, to gather their views about the school.
- The lead inspector examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance and documentation relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour. Inspectors also reviewed the documents available on the school website.
- Inspectors observed informal times, including arrival at school, break and lunchtime.
- The lead inspector met with governors and discussed the school with a local authority representative.
- The lead inspector took account of responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Anne Maingay, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Amanda Greaves

Ofsted Inspector

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